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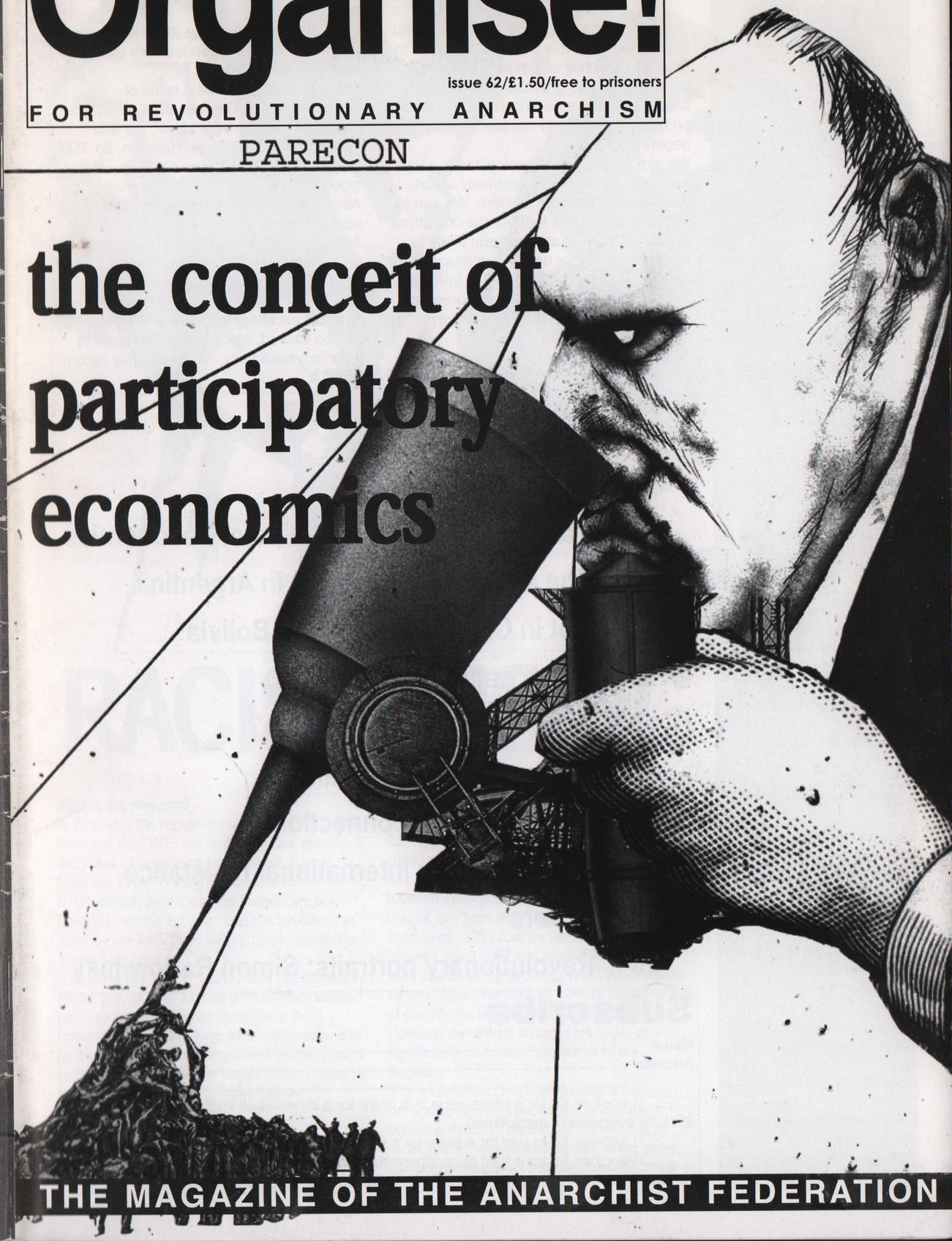
FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

PARECON

the conceit of participatory economics



THE MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Back issues

Back issues of Organise! are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each + SAE. Alternatively, send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we can find lying around.

Issue 19: The poll tax rebellion.
Issue 27: LA riots; Yugoslavia; Malcomn X.
Issue 29: Debate on the unions; Italian workers organise.
Issue 37: Pornography; Booze, cigs and dope; Moral panics.
Issue 40: Work, work, work; Art as a weapon.
Issue 46: Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin; Syndicalism.
Issue 48: French unemployed; Haillie Selassie; Revolutionary unions?
Issue 50: GM foods; Who owns the land; War in Kosovo; Ireland - the `peace` process.
Issue 51: War in Kosovo; Roots of our movement; Land and freedom; East Timor.
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Issue 57: The war against terror; Class war in Argentina; ADD; Primitivism.
Issue 58: Argentina: growing resistance; Paganism; Immigrant labour; Angola 3; US anarchist poets; Yellow House
Issue 59: Anarchism and Sex; Class Struggle in China; Arditi del Popolo; Scottish nationalism; Prison Industry; Zazous in Vichy France; Ito Noe.
Issue 60: Iraq War; Argentina; White Boys in Ireland; Fatherhood; Yelenski's fable; Senna Hoy.
Issue 61: Anti-war action; Argentina autonomous movement; New Economy; Airline strike; Punk Rock; Paris Commune; Prison Human Rights.

Organise!

Organise is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). It is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims is provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers.

We aim to produce Organise! twice a year. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first? Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our aims and principles can leave much open to debate.

As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responces from readers and spur the debate on.

The deadline for the next issue of Organise! will be October 2004. All contributions should be sent to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel Hight Street, London, E1 7QX. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disk (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk.

Acknowledgement: Most of the illustrations in this magazine are shamelessly ripped off from other magazines and websites. However, the photographs generally come from the excellent Indymedia website. They can be viewed, along with much more at www.indymedia.org. We thoroughly recommend it.

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RACISM RISING

As the 'peace process' hits yet another brick wall, the rise of racism in North Ireland is viewed by some as the price we will have to pay for 'normalisation', as though the blow-torch of sectarian invective will simply switch its focus on another set of blameworthies, marked out as somehow 'different'.

Playing the race card

In fact, with the recent electoral success of Sinn Fein and the DUP, the north is facing months, if not years, of continued polarisation. Racists from the WNP (White Nationalist Party), the BNP (British Nazi Party) and others are not, however, waiting for one –ism (sectarianism) to leave by the back door before breaking into the house with another.

Racism in our society is not a new phenomenon: ethnic groups have experienced institutionalised racism and racist attacks throughout the 'troubles'. Travellers have been and continue to be among the most discriminated against groups in Irish society north and south. What cannot be doubted is that racism must be tackled.

Statistics

The dramatic rise in the number of "racial incidents" in the north over recent years is illustrated clearly by statistics. Between 1996 and 1999, more than 350 race-motivated attacks were reported, a 400% increase on the previous period. The number of attacks on children also doubled - rising from 8.5% of total attacks in 1996 to more than 16% in 1999. The annual total increased from 186 to 269 incidents between 1999 and 2000 - a rise of 45%. Over the last two years these high levels of attack have continued. 226 racial incidents were reported between April 2002 and April 2003, with 185 such attacks in the previous year. Also, due to victims' fears over coming forward and their lack of confidence in the police tackling racist violence, the official statistics are likely to significantly understate the extent of the problem.

The truth is that Northern Ireland is fast-becoming the race-hate capital of Europe, breaking the UK's record for the number of racist attacks: spitting and stoning in the street, human excrement on doorsteps, swastikas on walls, pipe bombs, arson, the ransacking of

houses with baseball bats and crow bars, and white supremacist leaflets nailed to front doors.

Attacks

In the last few months, the Chinese community, the largest ethnic minority in the north, and which has had a presence here since the 1960s, has borne the brunt of most of these attacks. A local estate agent in the Village area of south Belfast has been warned not to accommodate 'Chinese, Blacks, or Asians'. Ten tenants have already been forced out via a systematic campaign of racial abuse. Last month, Ugandan and Romanian families were burned out. A six-foot plank was hurled through the front window of the home of a Pakistani woman who was eight months pregnant. She and her brother-in-law had moved in just twelve hours earlier. A Swedish family were burned out of their homes in Lurgan, presumably because they spoke with an accent (!), and a few miles away in Portadown there is continuing friction around the proposal to build a mosque in the area.

Role of loyalism?

With the standing down of the South Belfast commander of the UVF, following the racist attacks in the Village area, denials of loyalist paramilitary involvement ring hollow. Earlier in the year David Ervine, in an interview with Matthew Collins published in the February edition of Searchlight magazine, stated that he was in no position to "legislate for arseholes" and that;

"Racism is not acceptable to me and the UVF leadership has assured me that they are not going to sanction racist attacks, nor am I going to stand by and allow it to go unchallenged."

Links have and do undoubtedly exist between loyalism and fascism, both are ideologically based on British nationalism. While perhaps the leadership of loyalism may, in the words of Patrick Yu of the Chinese Welfare Association, "seem very serious" about taking responsibility and confronting racism it remains to be seen just how effective people like Ervine will be in confronting racism. They have already stated that the BNP is welcome to stand here – while of course denying that they will get many votes. Whether the standing down of the UVF commander who "sanctioned" racist attacks in the Village puts a stop to such attacks remains to be seen.

According to a report in the Observer newspaper (December 28th 2003), a leading UDA figure in the area stated;

"...he would not tolerate or sanction any attacks on the ethnic minority community by any of his members."

South Belfast DUP spokesperson Mark Robinson has claimed that it was merely a coincidence that racist attacks were taking place in loyalist areas. Even after the attack on the home of a Muslim family, and death threats against Muslim leaders in Craigavon, some local councillors were still denying that there was any racism there. Former Unionist Party Mayor Fred Crowe said;

"I do not accept that there is racism in Craigavon. It would be better if the police did their job in the area and concentrated on paramilitaries and drug dealers."

The PUP have supported Filipino workers in Antrim, and recently issued a joint statement with NICEM condemning racist attacks. A small number of loyalists were also present at the recent anti-racist rally in Belfast. Many loyalists are undoubtedly sincere in their anti-racism and identify fascism and nazism as ideologies which many of their parents and grandparents died to rid the world of in W.W.II.

Combat 18, the WNP and two BNP's

Combat 18 (a violent paramilitary nazi organisation named after the position of Adolf Hitler's initials in the alphabet) banners have been reported at Seaview football ground. Nick Griffin, British National Party (who have tried to recast themselves as the respectable face of British fascism) leader, has been reported as visiting 'disaffected' loyalists in recent weeks. The White Nationalist Party, a split from the British Nationalist Party, have according to the Sunday Life newspaper, been recruiting throughout north Antrim, mainly in Ballymena, but with cells also in Portadown and south Belfast. Another of the groups currently circulating hate literature is the November 9 Society. Also known as the British Nazi Party, the group takes its name from the anniversary of Kristallnacht - the night in 1938 when Nazi mobs went on the rampage throughout Germany, killing almost 100 Jews and destroying thousands of Jewish-owned businesses. The BNP is thought to be preparing to target Dungannon and the area covered by South Tyrone borough council, where there is a growing population of Portuguese migrant workers. Both the WNP and British Nazi Party have denied responsibility for the recent increase in racial tension. One source for the BNP has claimed that:

"The people who go out to commit those type of acts are unhinged. And whether they read our literature, or anyone else's literature, if they are that way inclined that's what they will do."

So when the words (hinged, naturally!) on the leaflet say:

"Asylum seekers would be asked to leave immediately; if they refused they would be marched to the coast, by the Army, and told to swim"

...anyone reading the words, agreeing with them, and attempting to put them into action are somehow 'unhinged' while the authors are not.(?) (Sunday Life, July 13th 2003).

The Far Right on the move?

Tactically, the far right wants to be in place and ready to capitalise politically on any "explosion" in the number of asylum-seekers entering the North. Already the government and media across the UK and Ireland are doing much of the ground work for them – with regular scare stories about "gypsy invasions", "floods of immigrants", "maternity tourism" and "welfare scroungers".

The far right's key date will be the summer of 2005 when local government elections are scheduled, with speculation that the BNP, NF and WNP will try to repeat some of the election successes of the British National Party in England.

As libertarian communists, members of Organise! and others in the north, need to rise to the challenge. We are aware of how racism is used to scapegoat failed economic policies, and to divide our class. We need to counter this with our own vision of multi-culturalism, flourishing in a world without borders, and without the fiction of racial difference.

For more info about Organise!, check out their website at: www.organiseireland.org

THE SAD CONCEIT OF PARTICIPATORY ECONOMICS

As social and organisational anarchists, members of the Anarchist Federation believe that a free, fair and stable society of the future must be of a particular kind – anarchist communism.

People who are not anarchist communists are given the opportunity to imagine, test and promote ideas which will be ready to hand when a revolution occurs.

Now this matters because it is likely that the revolution will not be brought about by a single organisation, by a group of organisations or even millions of individuals believing one set of things about how society should be organised. It is likely that before, during and after the collapse of capitalism dozens of theories and many practical expressions of these theories will emerge. Now that could be a very good thing. But what if what is proposed and implemented is not libertarian in nature or has the capacity to recreate capitalism? Are we then to have to fight a second revolution against such ideas? Or do we challenge them now?

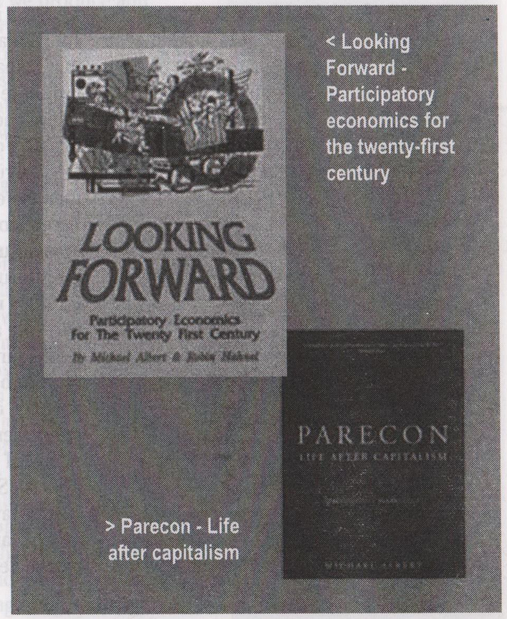
One such system is called Participatory Economics (parecon). It was proposed in two books (The Political Economy of Participatory Economics, and Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the Twenty First Century) and has some support among anarchists and autonomists. It is a system for managing the economy of (present and) future society based on a fairer relationship between producer and consumer. While it continues to make use of a (modified) market, it seeks to abolish the power of capitalists to dictate the value of our work and the cost of consumption (i.e. wages and prices) by establishing a democratic, participatory economy based on socialised production but individualised consumption. Now who could argue with that?

Parecon: How It Is Meant To Work

Work and consumption will be self-managed. Production will take place in factories and workplaces organised in producer federations. These will decide what to produce, at what input cost (price), and in what quantity. The right to consume will be earned through work, with society granting individuals 'consumption shares' in return for labour. People who choose not to work earn no shares (not even dole) and don't eat. How many consumption shares we earn will be decided collectively with each job graded according to the social cost of production and the effort required; basically, the less socially-costly the job but the more effort required, the higher the wages, sorry, 'share'. The relations between individuals and society-at-large will be mediated through producer/worker and neighbourhood/consumer councils. Co-ordinating and mediating federations called Iterative Facilitation Boards (IFBs), would set prices based on the social cost to produce things and wages based on the 'disutility' of particular kinds of work and the effort involved in them. In order to create some basic level of fairness, each person would have 'balanced' jobs, with some shit work, some mental work, some manual work and so on, with varying rates of pay. Involvement in all the phases and stages of this economic process would be participatory and democratic in nature, creating an informed, empowered society of workers and consumers. So goes the theory.

Parecon was invented by a group of American thinkers and economists and there's a lot more to it than this short description but you've got the principles. It is an incredibly complex market system that would require many millions of people to

As class struggle anarchists we rarely spend a lot of time thinking about, describing and experimenting with the forms of the future society; we're too busy fighting the one that exists today.



< Looking Forward - Participatory economics for the twenty-first century

> Parecon - Life after capitalism

operate. For instance, there would be people actually measuring how hard a job is, assigning it a rating, balancing that rating off against millions of others, calculating relative costs and 'disutilities' and then trying to balance off the productive power and consumption of four or five billion people in millions of factories. To give you a flavour of this, consider this quote from one of Parecon's inventors to a question about calculating cost-benefit: "Say master carpentry has a disutility rating of .84 where 1.00 is the average disutility of labor in general. The indicative price of master carpentry labor would be calculated as follows: take the indicative price that emerges from the planning process – which will be the analogue of the price of arable land with 20 inches of rain and a 3 month growing season, and just like the indicative price for that land reflects productivity and scarcity as determined by supply and demand through bidding from all potential users in the economy – and multiply that price for master carpentry labour by .84. In this way disutility can be combined with scarcity and productivity to give us an overall assessment of social opportunity costs of using different kinds of labor. Consider the vast effort that would need to go into making trillions of calculations of this kind in a more or less endless round of price- and wage-setting. Then think about the vast power that could be wielded by any group of people controlling this process. Think about how you would feel if a faceless bureaucrat somewhere was deciding how much your labour was worth this week, especially if that decision affected how well you ate, or whether you could afford healthcare or schooling (yes, in parecon you have to pay for housing, food, healthcare and everything else). Parecon uses market economics. All markets are subject to a series of influences: the supply of commodities or labour, the aspirations of actors within it, their relative power and so on. Like all markets it can be manipulated and controlled and its operation may not always be fair. Markets have ability to confer political power on those who control them. And that political power can be used to defend or extend our control over the market.

The pareconomists argue that the social problems that arise from a war between the classes (in the parecon world, between producer federation, consumer federations and IFBs) just wouldn't occur. They argue that in a balanced economy like parecon, you can only get higher consumption shares or lower prices by increasing the overall size of the cake, which is good because everyone benefits don't they? This is the classic argument of capitalists if you think about it. Pareconomists say this: "In parecon, everyone gets a share of income based on the effort and sacrifice they expend in work" (Yes, Boss). Or this: "There is no way to aggrandize self or a group without benefiting everyone. For me to get ahead, the total product must grow or I have to expend more effort and sacrifice, which is fair enough." The capitalist says: "If I work hard and increase the total wealth in the world, why shouldn't I get ahead, you benefit too." Well yes, but now you're rich and powerful and we're not. In an FAQ about 'dissent', a pareconomist explained that if you had a dissenting view from the majority, you still might be able to persuade your local producer federation to give you the means to express you dissent through, say, a radical magazine, if they thought dissent was useful to society. Might they be persuaded by propaganda, bribery or threats? You betcha! So under parecon, dissent can be stifled by being denied the physical means to express itself unless you have the means of persuasion to hand.

Individuals and groups with money (and that's what consumption shares are) can influence society into believing particular things and taking decisions based on that belief. For instance: "Entrepreneurs like me can run your schools more efficiently than the education federations!"

Pareconomists have no ideological defence against such a proposal. They simply say, "If it's true, society benefits so let him do it. If it's not true, society will find him out and take away his right to run the school". Yeah, sure! The ability of 'society' to reclaim badly-used resources from their 'owners' or 'users' is entirely dependent on the power of ordinary people versus the power of the owning and managerial classes. Suppose I had taken the prudent step of saying: "I can provide national security and personal protection at half-price. Let me run your army and police force" first? After all, that's what the first monarchs, priests and chieftains did. What then?

Parecon has within it the scope for large inequalities since it allows people to accumulate wealth over time and its only defence against people or groups taking control of parts of the economy and using it for their personal benefit is that the rest of us wouldn't let them. If true, we wouldn't be in the mess we are today. In parecon society, workers councils and producer federations control the means of production; after all, they are in physical possession of the mines, factories and transport systems. The federations exist, in part, to get the highest price they can for their member's labour. The iterations between consumer, producer and co-ordinator can easily become negotiations in which monopoly of the productive power can be used to bargain up consumption shares (wages) and bargain down prices. Consumers may be able to resist price-fixing for 'luxury' items but what about bread?

Many people fascinated by parecon ask would there be a government to control all this? Pareconomists reply that government exists to correct market deficiencies or supply goods (like national defence or healthcare) that markets are bad at supplying. In the perfect world of the parecon, these goods can be supplied by the producer federations. But there will still, apparently, be a need for political institutions to make decisions about: "war and peace, whether drugs are legal or not, what the rules and procedures of the criminal justice system will be, immigration policy, etc". Pareconomists tend to argue that the political and economic spheres would be largely separate. But political institutions making policy decisions do intrude into the economic arena. Immigration policy determines the supply of labour and the cost to local economies of losing or gaining workers. Drugs policy can make certain products illegal and close down the factories producing them. A criminal justice system could declare 'economic sabotage' (strikes) illegal.

Parecon does not seem to rule out political parties. They could capture these institutions wholesale, using the economic and organisational power of supportive producer federations to blackmail the rest of society or persuade us to vote 'Socialist Worker For A Fair Society!'

Pareconomists seem to ignore entirely the lessons of the Russian Revolution about how a tightly organised, ideological faction could take over economic and political institutions in a supposedly free society.

Or the lessons of the Spanish Revolution about how co-ordinating institutions like banks, commodity and production boards and so on can be captured and used against rival groups and the parts of the economy they control, for instance by bankrupting their factories (and yes, factories can be bankrupted and closed in the parecon society).

Parecon is a system in which you are compelled to work in the regulated system of the parecon. Bureaucrats establish the value of the work you do and the reward you get for that work. They also control prices and the cost to you of the things you need. The sole mechanism of control is our participation which to work is made obligatory on all people: "time necessary for consumption decision-making would be treated like time necessary for production decision-making; as part of one's obligations in a participatory economy". Our obligations! Enforced by who? In parecon, as with capitalism, wages and prices are determined by a series of power relationships, mediated by a market (the IFBs). It cannot prevent wealthy entrepreneurs from taking control of parts of the economy or powerful federations controlling prices or exploiting monopolies. The political institutions we use to balance power between producer and owner (government, parties etc) would either be non-existent or have to be re-invented to establish new controls. Its only overall regulating mechanism is the amount of what's available but as we know to our cost, it's not the size of the global economy that matters, it's how it is shared out that sucks. Though the means of production are socialised, individual property is not. Accumulated wealth confers power that enables people to grab, protect and increase their property. Parecon does not say how it will prevent private ownership developing except to say "it won't". What is to stop property accumulation beginning with entrepreneurs taking control of production? What is to stop producer units selling 'surplus' production outside the regulated economy and pocketing the profit? Pareconomists admit they could not stop black economies where people buy and sell goods and labour outside the regulated (sorry iterated) economy developing. What then? If you want to dissent, you must ask permission or starve. If you want to live and work outside the system, parecon has laws for people like you.

Now those people who want a different kind of society to us always say, "OK, if parecon won't work, what's your answer?" There's a rich and detailed literature about anarchist communist society, so if you want to know, go to it. But since we've analysed parecon in particular ways, here's a description of anarchist communism on its terms.

On Balancing Production & Consumption

The basic formulation of anarchist communism is "from each according to abilities, to each according to need". So work is self-managed (like parecon) but voluntary (not like parecon). We decide how and when we work and what we do, directly co-operating with others to create or find appropriate jobs. There will be no obligation to work but a social imperative to be productive (though it is the individual who decides what is 'productive', not society). To the argument "what about lazy people?" we answer, "he may be lazy today but will he be lazy forever?" Who can be really happy by doing nothing all day, forever? To the argument "but what about greedy people?" we answer this: since we all want to work as little as possible, why would we over-produce in order to feed or supply the greedy? And what incentive can an anarchist communist society offer me to work long hours to feed your greed: wealth, fame, status? Nothing. You'd be regarded as sick or with pity, not a customer to be satisfied. What can you accumulate in order to feed your desires? Nothing, there's no wealth to be stolen and splashed around. Society will be organised around the principles of human sufficiency, not conspicuous consumption. If you're always taking, pretty soon your co-workers and neighbours are going to stop giving. As an aside, this demonstrates that an anarchist society based on the individualist principle of personal freedom and uncontrolled consumption cannot work. Communities will be largely self-sufficient so co-ordination will be extremely simple; production and consumption will be balanced locally and directly, without huge bureaucracies with stop-clocks and calculators or the need for wasteful commerce and trade. And to avoid bureaucracies developing, work in planning and co-ordination will be rotated, and with people who want to do the work chosen by lot and open to local scrutiny. We're going to reconstruct society, including the ways we produce and consume, on simpler, more local and more human-friendly ways, deconstructing at the same time those artificial desires that capitalism has developed to fulfil. And all this will be largely self-regulating, because it will be simpler and with fewer demands made up on it to supply new and unnecessary things now!

On The Nature of Need

Parecon is based on the principle that a large proportion of people are lazy or greedy and that if uncontrolled their behaviour will wreck society. It therefore invents a vast range of controls and other systems to make people work and limit their freedom to consume. Anarchist communism is a science, just like parecon. But it is also a moral philosophy, a series of choices about how we want to live, which parecon is not. No revolution will occur unless we choose to bring it about. And a people that does not know what it is fighting for or what to do with victory is unlikely to win the war and will never win the peace. Are we really going to fight a long war

Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in Organise! you might be interested in these:

SchNEWS - Direct action news sheet. Send stamps to PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2 2DX

Direct Action - Anarcho-syndicalist magazine produced by the Solidarity Federation. £1.50 issue/£5 subs PO Box 29, SWPDO, M15 5HW

Freedom: Anarchist Fortnightly - Under new management! Now more anarchist-communist influenced and worth a read. From Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX. Send a pound for an issue.

Earth First! Action Update - Monthly news from Earth First! £5 for 12 issue sub. PO Box 487, Norwich, NR2 3AL

Collective Action Notes - Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

Do or Die! - It only comes out once a year and covers a whole range of environmentally related issues, including news and discussion on the anti-capitalist movement. We don't agree with everything in it and they sometimes say unpleasant things about us, but it's a must anyway. c/o Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY. £5.00 for an issue.

NEFAC, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists - Probably the group closest to us politically. Write to either NEFAC (English speaking), Roundhouse Collective, c/o Black Planet radical Books, 1621 Fleet St., Baltimore MD 21231, USA or NEFAC (Francophone), Groupe Anarchists Emile-Henry, C.P. 55051, 138 St-Valliers O., Quebec G1K 1JO, Canada. Alternatively, you can link to them from our website (www.afed.org.uk).

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against capitalism in order to throw it all away by rampant consumption and self-gratification? And can we do it if other people refuse to feed our obsessive need to consume? Anarchist communism strips society down to the basics, to the necessary (though that's still a lot), thus removing all the things that governments and corporations and armies exist to create and control. What we call need and desire today are wholly artificial phenomena, created by capitalism as the petrol fuelling growth. Is it so impossible to imagine a society of humans with simpler needs or in which the primary impulse is to share what we have with others, alongside (not instead of or before) meeting our own needs. There may not be as many luxuries as there are today but there will be more freedom. Anarchist communism strips away everything that gets in the way of a truly free set of decisions about how each of us want to live, set in the context of an organically functional – and therefore ethical – society. Society will have no obligation to gratify our desires but will extend to us the freedom to gratify them by our own efforts and by co-operating with others who share that desire.

Work And Freedom

Work will be a voluntary act, a personal choice to work or not to work, to work now or later, to work hard or slowly or carefully, with our hands or our minds or both. Because the meaning of work lies within the personal benefit to ourselves and the social benefit to others, it must be freely chosen. Nothing in society will compel us to do work we do not want to do in ways we find wrong or alien to ourselves. Nor will there be any incentives to do this or that work. There will, for instance, be no more prestige or status attached to one job compared to another and where a person can do the work, there will be no artificial barrier (a union card, a qualification, a tribal affiliation, a greased palm) to doing it. With this freedom comes a generalised responsibility to ensure society maintains itself. If the free society is generally beneficial to all, we will want to keep it going. We will need to develop a sense of what needs to be done and whether and how we can contribute to that aim. In part that will come, as it does now, from education and socialisation, the millions of interactions we have with our fellow human beings that shape who we are and define what we want to do with our lives. But the key part in all this will be ourselves, our social conscience, our sense of what is best for both our society and ourselves. The measure of our society and its worth to humanity will be the extent to which what needs to be done is done, by free choice and without compulsion and the pleasure humanity gets in the doing of it. We will have to use our minds a lot more, and exercise our bellies less.

The chief problem with parecon is that it is reformist and ignores the lessons of history. It believes that it is possible to manipulate government (through campaigns, lobbying and the like), to create conditions in which participatory economics might gradually emerge and flourish. Its theorists admit that government is unlikely to legislate for a form of economics that has no role for government. But they argue that space could be created for experiments in, and practical experience of, parecon. The lesson of history they ignore is that such experiments occur as mass phenomena only where the power of the state is temporarily absent or heavily curtailed, through war, economic collapse or revolution. Pareconomists are asking us to spend decades, perhaps centuries endlessly negotiating with government for permission to co-operate with each other on different terms than today. As if we had not spent centuries already requesting the state to allow us a little more freedom and only got it when we took it. We do need more understanding of how an anarchist communist society might work and what its benefits might be, both among ourselves and wider society. But if anarchist communism is possible, it ceases to be a utopia that cannot be reached. We do not need to settle for the half-way houses of socialism, collectivism or pareconomy. We can jump from capitalism to anarchist communism if enough people have made the decision to desire it and bring it about. That's not as impossible as you may think, so long as we start to decide today about the society of tomorrow.

Other Anarchist Federation Publications

All pamphlets include the cost of postage.

Anarchism As We See It - £1 - Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy to read form.

The Anarchist Movement In Japan - £1.50 - A fascinating account of Japanese anarchism in the 20th Century. Japan had an anarchist movement of tens of thousands. This pamphlet tells their story.

Aspects of Anarchism - £1 - Thoughts and commentary on some of the most important issues that anarchists must confront. Collected articles from the pages of Organise! on the fundamentals of anarchist communism.

Against Parliament, for Anarchism - £1 - Insights into the political parties of Britain and why anarchists oppose all parties.

Basic Bakunin - £1 - This revised edition outlines the ideas of one of the 19th century founders of class struggle anarchism.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation - £1 - This 2003 reprint explains the concept of revolutionary organisation and its structure. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text.

Beyond Resistance – A revolutionary manifesto - £2 - A detailed analysis of modern capitalism and the state and our understanding of how they will be overthrown.

Work – Why it must be destroyed before it destroys us - £1 - The title says it all really.

COMING SOON: Ecology and Class - Where There's Brass, There's Muck

Our newly-revised and extended pamphlet on ecology.

THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT IN ARGENTINA

The following information is based on a visit by a French anarcho-syndicalist woman who recently spent more than a month and a half in Argentina (an account of which appeared in the paper of the Organisation Communiste Libertaire, Courant Alternatif).

The anarchist movement in Argentina is in a difficult situation. Its size is reduced from the old days of struggle. It is split. Its influence is weak. Its financial sources are few and clearly insufficient. It has practically no influence in society and outside the capital is practically invisible. There is a generation gap between the few, very old, militants who took part in revolutionary struggles, and the majority of the movement consisting of young people, full of determination but with little experience.
There are few militants between these age groups. The dictatorship and the resulting 30,000 dead and "disappeared" have ensured this. The vastness of the country and the very hard economic situation has made communication, visits and face-to-face meetings very difficult. Few anarchist books and texts are in print, and those that circulate are often old, often drawn from stocks dating from the 1960s and 1970s, and dealing above all with the historic past of the movement

The Federación Obrera Regional Argentina (FORA)

Today little remains of this once large anarchist workers organisation with a heroic past. A few handfuls of young people, supported by several old militants still living, have nevertheless taken up the struggle and maintain the FORA in the midst of great difficulties. At the present moment this is composed of 4 small Resistance Societies, in Buenos Aires, San Martin (near the capital) Cholila (a small village) and Esquel (a small town of 30,000) in Patagonia in the far south.
The Resistance Society of Buenos Aires consists of about 15 people, essentially young unemployed and students. Their centre, situated in the old quarter of La Boca is the only one that the FORA still has. It is pretty run down. During heavy rain, water from the courtyard pours into the meeting hall and forms a pond in its centre. The roof has leaks as well, and water runs down one of the walls in the archives room, a wall that looks like it's going to collapse soon.
With a little money that they receive from the International Workers Association (Anarcho-syndicalist international) or as a gift from the Federación Libertaria Argentina (who themselves get some money from time to time from sections of the International of Anarchist Federations) the Foristas are attempting to renovate their centre. Another problem is that the right to own the property has to be transferred to the young militants because the old comrades who have the ownership know that their time is not long. But legal doings like that cost a lot of money, and the FORA does not have that sort of money at the moment.
The centre has a little library, several old computers and some historic archives of the FORA (but these have been dispersed over the course of time, some ruined in inadequate storerooms, others vanished with police or army raids, others lost in the splits that took place in the 1910s and 1920s. The most important of them are in the hands of the official Peronist union, the CGT!).
There is a second-hand photocopier, bought with IWA money. This produces leaflets, A3 posters, and Organización Obrera (Worker Organisation) their bimonthly paper (A4 format, usually 12 pages) with a print run of several hundred. They receive newspapers from the IWA and the international anarchist movement. The propaganda they produce consists mostly of declarations of principles, historical articles or old texts reprinted in their paper or in leaflets. On the 1st May and other historic occasions they organise open-air meetings (they have a small loudspeaker) and bookstalls. On 1st May 2002, 400 people turned out for their meeting.
Some of the young unemployed FORA members are in the process of setting up a small cooperative producing bread in a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Buenos Aires where an independent group runs a small libertarian social centre. This would allow them to get some money and to be involved a little in that neighbourhood.
The French comrade did not meet the San Martin group, which appears to be a handful of people, which

manages to produce a little paper, *Sociedad de Resistencia* (*Society of Resistance*).
Twenty-seven hours by bus gets you to Patagonia where 2 small Resistance Societies of the FORA exist. They gather together two handfuls of militants and a number of sympathisers. At Esquel, the Resistance Society distributes *Organización Obrera*, bundles of leaflets that they sometimes receive from the capital, and handwritten or silk-screened small posters.
They are regularly involved in support to the indigenous communities of the Mapuche of the region (small in number, the Mapuches mainly live on the Chilean coast) who are facing increasing problems of being expelled from their land. In the nineteenth century, these Indian communities were violently resettled by the army on poor soil. The survivors of these extremely murderous operations did what they could, but with no land deeds. Now, vast swathes of "fiscal" land, (belonging to the State) are being bought by big multinational companies to carry out prospecting or the raising of livestock. (This is the case with Benetton, which owns huge areas where it raises sheep for wool that is sent to its textile factories). The little Mapuche communities live on these bought lands and are often threatened by expulsion. The police are violently involved in these actions. The FORA is regularly associated with the protests of the communities (little demonstrations or symbolic occupations of public buildings). A march for the respecting of indigenous rights and against the sale and parcelling up of Patagonia took place in the capital in April 2003, following a wave of expulsions and police attacks against the Mapuches, involving the exploitation of an open-air gold mine at Esquel.
This mining project has raised tension in the region. Meridian Gold, a Canadian mining multinational, bought land on one of the mountains overlooking Esquel, after having detected gold. Its idea was to exploit an open mine and to sift and recover gold using cyanide. This is causing serious problems with a minimum of 2 large explosions each day spreading dust over the town, important risks of pollution linked to cyanide use, the poisoning of water coming from the mountain (most of which supplies poor neighbourhoods of the town), and a major social and political influence over the town by Meridian Gold.
This has resulted in large opposition drawing in shopkeepers, people involved in local tourism, the middle classes, ecologist associations, etc. Demonstrations of a size never seen before have taken place at Esquel involving thousands of people. One of these led to an all night occupation of a hall in the Palace of Justice after the violent expulsion of Mapuches in the little locality of Vuelta del Rio. Here 3 old Mapuches had their house destroyed, their kitchen garden razed and their livestock driven off by 20 mounted police who threatened them with death if they did not leave.
"Citizens" committees against the mine have emerged, putting up posters, distributing leaflets and flyers painted with slogans. Meridian Gold has undertaken an expensive promotion of its project, with publicity spots in the media, pages in the local press, lobbying of MPS and councillors, arguing that it is bringing economic development and jobs. Around 300-400 jobs for a period of 8 years are promised, and this has won the support of the Peronist Construction Workers Union of the Argentine Region (UOCRA) whose bureaucrats have made common cause with the multinational capitalists. Tension mounted, and the buildings of the company had to be protected by the police. Reinforcements of provincial and federal police as well as gendarmerie had to be sent to Esquel.
The affair has ended for the moment with a referendum in March 2003. Despite the efforts of Meridian Gold, there was an 80% NO vote (70% of the electorate turned out). Meridian tried to buy the votes of the poorest people, with free concerts, distribution of T-shirts and caps decorated with "YES to the mine", free meals with as much meat as you could eat, and 50 pesos on average for a YES vote. The poor pragmatically took all this, before voting NO!
The position of Meridian Gold and UOCRA hardened and there were many attempts at intimidation - anonymous phone calls, trashing of the homes of activists, burglaries, intimidating home visits, culminating in the beating-up of an activist when he turned up for work in the morning, accompanied by death threats and a cocked pistol pressed against his stomach. A mass meeting in front of the main company offices took place, which turned into a street battle when UOCRA thugs attacked it. An "escrache" (a surprise action of public denunciation) followed in front of the house of the mine's principal engineer who was woken and treated to all sorts of names by about 40 demonstrators. The local FORA appears to have participated in all this agitation.
At Cholila, several hours bus journey from Esquel and lost in the woods and mountains, is another Resistance Society. It participates in a "libertarian" community, composed of young people involved in artisanal work. It suffers from the difficult economic situation, as well as problems of an interpersonal nature and of internal functioning.
A regional anarchist gathering took place in January 2003 and brought together anarchists from Esquel, Bariloche, Viedma and Bolson. It led to a blockade of the national highway involving 30 masked comrades and lasted 3 hours with anti-mine slogans painted along the highway and the distribution of leaflets. No participant has been identified by the police and there was maximum publicity- it was the first road blockade in Patagonia for a long time, a region little touched by the social agitation affecting the rest of the country.

The Federación Libertaria Argentina (FLA)
The French comrade had little contact with this organisation. It claims 50-60 members in all the country and is based in the main in the capital. It has a large centre, again pretty run down. Some renovations have now taken place with money arriving from abroad. It has extensive archives and a relatively important library. Quite a few university researchers use it. On a visit there, the French comrade found several old militants, several in their fifties, and a majority of young people (between 20 and 30 years old). The FLA publishes El Libertario but apparently very sporadically, the last copy that she saw being December 2001! Some of the FLA's members are involved in the popular assemblies and distribute an irregular newssheet called De Pie (Arise!) The FLA also publishes, when it has money, a few small booklets on the history of the Argentinean movement or on presentations of anarchism. The visiting Frenchwoman did not get the feeling that the FLA was particularly dynamic.
Its relations with the FORA seem to be embittered by old quarrels, because the FORA veterans have not forgiven the FLA for having, out of their hatred of Peronism, taken the side of certain military coup d'etats!

The Jose Ingenieros Peoples Library
This was founded in 1935 by anarchists and a few socialists who did not stay with it very long. It has moved several times, was shut by Peron from 1949 to his fall in 1955, then suffered police raids and the "disappearance" of some of its participants and sympathisers during the dictatorship. Many conferences, meetings, filmshows and exhibitions have been organised by its members. It has owned the building it inhabits since the 1950s, which is quite big and quite well looked after. A dozen participants are involved, including a few support of the International Solidarity Network (SIL- supported by the Swedish syndicalist union SAC, Spanish syndicalist union CGT, and organisations like the French Alternative Libertaire).

The Organisacion Revoluzionario Anarquista (ORA)
This group, apparently set up recently, was again not met personally by the French visitor. Apparently it has 5 to 10 members and publishes a monthly paper called *Resistencia* (A4 format, 8 pages). It seems to consist mainly of students, at least one of who comes from a family of leaders of the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party, which might explain its politics. In its paper it talks of "the revolutionary vanguard" " workers' government" " programme of the workers and masses" " militant work in cells" and calls for " a workers and peasants government and the creation of people's self-defence militias in Iraq to struggle against the Yankee-imperialist war". A distinctly dodgy outfit, which leads us on to the.....

AUCA and MUP
Sixty kilometres to the south of Buenos Aires is the university town of La Plata (600,000 inhabitants). There the French comrade met the group of the AUCA-Socialismo Libertario. This group consists of 15 militants publishing a well-designed paper, *Ofensiva Libertaria*, with a print run of 500 (A4 format of 8 pages). This little group, composed mainly of students and unemployed ex-students was the inspiration for the creation of an important 'piquetero' movement in the La Plata region and the district of Quilmes, the Movimiento de Unidad Popular (MUP).
Pre-occupied for a long time with the lack of social influence and implantation of anarchism, the AUCA have worked for several years in some poor neighbourhoods. With the deepening of the crisis, the social explosion of December 2001 and the winning by the piquetero movements of control of individual plans of social aid, MUP has, like most piquetero movements, grown considerably. Today more than one thousand people are members, grouped together in a "front" of neighbourhoods and a student "front" controlling several hundred plans.
In the neighbourhoods and shantytowns the work of the MUP consists of developing comedores (people's kitchens for children) setting up classes and schools, vegetable gardens and bread ovens. The MUP is equally involved in campaigns around public health (sanitary and medical conditions are often very bad in the poorer areas) and participates with other piquetero movements in a " Coordination of Public Health" which has led to blockades of pharmaceutical laboratories and campaigns of collections at chemists and pharmacies, which has allowed them to gather together 33,000 various medical treatments which have been shared out among the dispensaries run by the different movements of the coordination.
At the university level, AUCA has been behind the creation of Aguas Negras (Black Waters) a student association that is allied with the Maoists and the group Quebracho (inspired by the left Peronists of previous decades, the Montoneros). They have taken control of the leadership of the student federation of La Plata, which was controlled before 2001 by liberal Peronists. They presented a list with their allies at student elections and had several elected in certain university departments and are participating in "power-sharing" bodies of the university.
With the MUP, the AUCA has occupied a private school which went bankrupt in the centre of La Plata. This is a huge building where they can meet, house people, set up a library and school courses, and have public meetings etc.
AUCA has an important sphere of influence via the MUP but at the same time is overwhelmed by the amount of work and confronted with the same problems as other piquetero movements. Their use and direct control of the individual plans of social aid has attracted to the MUP many people who are non-politicised but need the help of the plans

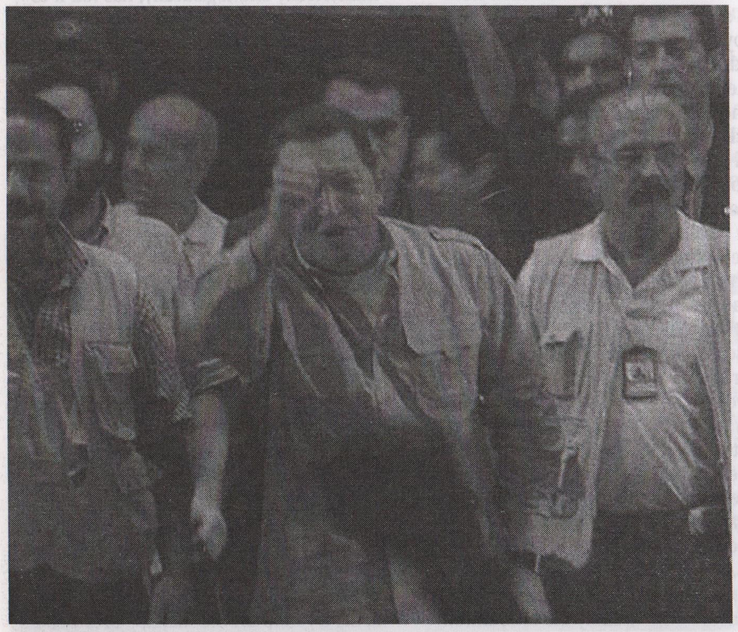
They have to gain political and practical experience and the MUP has to function in a fully participative way (not easy, especially at the beginning, with the number of inexperienced and passive new members). In the present period with the falling back of the social struggles, the State will probably try to find ways of regaining control of the plans of social aid, which will empty the piquetero movements of the greater part of their members. To avoid that, schemes for people's bakeries, vegetable plots, the raising of rabbits and chickens and metal workshops have to be set up to keep these people involved before the State turns the tap off on the social aid plans.
The AUCA is inspired by the practices of the Federación Anarquista Uruguayano – the Anarchist Federation of Uruguay (FAU) a specifically Platformist organisation which has set up "broad" fronts of action among workers, students and in the neighbourhoods. This unfortunately has the effect of producing a Leninist schema with a political vanguard linked to a mass organisation with a "broad" recruitment, little politicised and at least partly manipulated by the objectives of the vanguard.
The AUCA's drive to develop influence and implantation and to develop numerically and logistically, has led it to involvement in the game of electoral representation at the university, to trying to build a base of support in part relying on a presence in the institutions, and alliances "against nature" with political grouplets.
The AUCA also refers to the development of "people's power" of "a government from below" based on organisations of the "popular forces" and on strategic alliances between revolutionary organisations. This power would have a "national, anti-imperialist, popular and democratic" content and would develop, at least at the start, " in the general framework of the bourgeois State". Even if their ideological references are anarchist (of a clearly Platformist and class struggle tendency) the organisational culture and strategy of the AUCA is undoubtedly strongly tainted by Marxism and indeed Leninism. This explains why, despite its real mass influence and its willingness to "bring anarchism down into the street", most of the other libertarian groups in the country regard AUCA with mistrust or hostility, as being a group on the margins or indeed outside the anarchist movement.

HOT IN CHILE, ON THE BOIL IN BOLIVIA

On August 13, 2003 Chile had its first general strike since the Pinochet dictatorship. It was supported by 80% of workers in both the public and private sector.

The anarchists of the CUAC- Congress of Anarcho-Communist Unification- have been among those agitating for this general strike over the course of the last year. There is a massive level of unemployment in Chile, many jobs are short term and there has been a general impoverishment among the working class. Privatisations and a massive debt have contributed to these miseries. Alongside this is a massive anger among the people against the widespread corruption within the governing class. The government of Ricardo Lagos and his Socialist Party are implementing laws and a neo-liberal economic plan developed under the Pinochet regime. As well as workers, students, various women's organisations, artisans and the unemployed have been involved in the unrest. Whilst it was officially led by the main trade union organisation, the CUT, it still represented a general wish to get rid of the old Pinochet codes of work and the old Pinochet political constitution.

The strike was most massively supported among the copper miners, health workers and teachers in the public sector. In the private sector the taxi drivers were the most militant. Also noticeable was the participation of the lorry drivers, who were used by the military in the run up to the coup of 1973. But the situation has changed considerably and 90,000 of them are unemployed.



Nearly a million people demonstrated in the main towns. The police viciously attacked these, and in Santiago, there were 200 arrests. Workers, unemployed and students responded bravely and the riot police were forced to retreat under a rain of stones. The copper miners physically confronted the police in northern Chile. The socialist government is using the sinister political police against the unrest. At the same time, the Socialist Party said it was supporting the strike! Outside the workplaces there is a growing movement in the neighbourhoods and shanty towns, which is now beginning to coordinate throughout Chile. The mass movement in Chile is at its first stage compared to the movements in Argentina and Bolivia.

On the boil in Bolivia

The history of Bolivia is marked by a long tradition of struggles. In 1952 a popular insurrection ended the military dictatorship and workers took control of the mines. To head off genuine socialisation, the government of Paz Estenssoro nationalised the tin mines.

In 1978 Bolivian women opposed to the dictatorship started a hunger strike which ignited a general strike leading to the fall of the dictator Hugo Banzer.

In 2000 the population of Cochabamba, the second town of the country, rose against the privatisation of water and the British multinational that owned the water distribution network had to withdraw from its concession. This lead to the municipalisation of water.

The popular uprising of September-October 2003 which led to the fall of president Sanchez de Lozada mobilised 70 % of the population but did not raise the question of changing society radically.

There was massive unrest in Bolivia in opposition to the export of gas to the USA in those months. The Western media put the accent on this as the cause of the unrest, but really it was a catalyst for general discontent over widespread privatisation, the cutting of pensions, education "reforms", and calls for the redistribution of the land and the determination of the government, under pressure from the US, to destroy the cultivation of coca leaf.

Already during a revolt of 12-13 February 2003, the government had fired on the crowd, killing 35 and wounding 210.

The September uprising was ignited in the Altiplano region. There the peasants blockaded all the main routes to the capital, La Paz. As a result there were hard struggles with the forces of order, leading to 6 dead including a child of 7. In the town of El Alto, with a population of 650,000, a "civic strike" organised by the neighbourhood associations paralysed the town and spread through the La Paz valley. The army surrounded the town with tanks. As a result of struggles with the military, at least 30 people were killed. In response, electric power stations and gas pipelines were attacked. Another child, aged 5, died in the confrontations. Rumours circulated of mutinies in the barracks and police stations.

Three thousand miners marched from Huanuni to La Paz to join the protests. The army blocked their route on 15th October a hundred miles from El Alto. Another vicious attack took place, leading to 2 dead and more than 15 wounded by rifle fire. The soldiers used the situation to rob the miners of their personal possessions. On the 15th also, the military closed down several daily papers that criticised the Sanchez de Lozada government. The television studios were also attacked by the military, but huge assemblies outside them caused the army to retreat. This was not the case with various radio stations, where the army dynamited the studios.

Goni has gone

Various ministers began to resign, but "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada then appeared in public surrounded by fascist and far right leaders and proposed a referendum to "consult" on the question of gas sales. This was meant to calm things down, but only led to larger demonstrations, where the subject of 75 murdered by the regime in the confrontations, and avoided by "Goni", was put on the agenda. Goni referred to anyone opposing the government as "terrorists, drug traffickers, enemies of democracy, anarchists and delinquents".

The military panicked more and began to destroy TV aerials in the working class areas. On the 16th October enormous demonstrations converged together on the administrative capital. More confrontations with the military took place leading to more deaths. The vice-president broke ranks and said he was opposed to the government's policies. Seven hundred people set up "hunger strike pickets" in various regions, demanding the resignation of Goni. He was forced to resign, to be replaced by his vice-president, Carlos Mesa.

Both the workers movement and the movements of the Indian tribes were decisive, but equally important was the mobilisation of young people, the citizens assemblies, and above all women.

Women were the driving force in setting off hunger strikes in 20 provinces of La Paz region. They were in the forefront of the road blockades. They inspired and gave courage in all the confrontations with the police and army. The mobilisation of women was massive but was passed over in silence by the political organisations, unions and struggle committees involved in the uprising. Men monopolised the platforms during the marches on La Paz. Women were relegated to domestic tasks like the preparation of meals.

At the presidential elections in June 2002, 48% of the population abstained and Goni owed his winning of the presidential post to an alliance of circumstance of all the political parties opposed to the Radical Left of the Indian leader Evo Morales, who came second.

Carlos Mesa has the support of the USA. The ruling class remains in place. The opposition does not want to go beyond the overthrow of Sanchez Lozada. Morales and Quispe, the Aymara Indian leaders, want to take power so they can convene a sovereign constituent assembly and push through a programme of nationalisation. But beyond these reformist measures are moves to federate the popular organisations that sprang out of the insurrection, to link together workers, peasants and Indian committees.

The anarchists in Bolivia do not have the capacity to exert much influence at the present time. Some are active in the revolutionary syndicalist minority of the COB (Bolivian Workers Central) others have been very active in the youth movements. They constitute the revolutionary elements that tomorrow, we hope, will give birth to a current capable of inspiring a new revolutionary movement in Bolivia.

AF pamphlets in languages other than English

As We See It: Available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek, German and now, thanks to our Spanish comrades, in Spanish and Portuguese. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation: Available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.

If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain or you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies? German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our **Aims and Principles** are also available for 20p plus postage.

Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

Resistance

Resistance is our monthly news sheet.

Our widespread distribution of Resistance means more and more people are coming into contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is at a time when the Labour Party, the Trotskyist and Stalinist left are spiralling rapidly downwards into decline. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country - with consistent and dogged hard work.

If you would like the next 12 issues of Resistance, then send POs, cheques for £4 payable to: 'AF' to: AF, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2XL.

Better still, take a bundle to distribute!

IN THE TRADITION PART 4

The penultimate article in our In The Tradition series.

This, the fourth part of our look at the political theories and movements which have influenced our development, takes in the last 35 years. It has been a period of great worldwide change and a period where new ideas have emerged and old ones, seemingly eclipsed, have been rediscovered.

The New Left

The 'New Left' which emerged in the 1960s attempted to distinguish itself from the old left of the established Communist parties, social democracy, Labourism and Stalinised socialism in general. It embraced the so-called 'Second wave' of feminism, sexual liberation and homosexual equality. Alongside anti-racism, all these ideas seem mainstream today but to the old left even 40 years ago they were new and startling ideas. Certainly the notion of women's' liberation and of racial equality had been present since the birth of socialism, but rarely were they seen as central to the revolutionary project. Superficially, much of the New Left appeared genuinely libertarian, genuinely interested in a truly social revolution. In reality, much of the New Left was tied closely to either Leninism (quite often Maoist or Trotskyist) or to more *openly* reformist currents of thought. The New Left may have rejected the worst excesses of Stalinism but generally fell short of making any critique of top-down versions of socialism and in many ways copied the failed politics of the past, not least in their willingness to support anything that moved including every 'national liberation' racket that emerged.

It is of little surprise then that many of the leading lights of the New Left were to re-appear in the last 35 years as thoroughly establishment figures, academics and media-gurus.

So, a balance sheet of the effect of the New Left shows that although it managed to bring up crucial questions, about what liberation must involve, which had remained marginal for many years, it was unable to give any answers.

So what of the libertarians?

The events in France in 1968 (see In the Tradition pt.3) had given anarchist and other revolutionary movements both a big surprise and a great deal of attention. In the period of the early 1970s anarchist, libertarian Marxist, council and left communist group emerged across Europe in a wave of interest amongst young workers and students for methods of understanding and changing the world around them. The anarchist movement at this time had been at a particularly low ebb, having never recovered from the eclipse of the movement during the 1930s-1940s. Certainly small currents still existed (see In the Tradition pt. 3) and some of these had attempted to renovate and bring forward new ideas. However, much of what passed for a movement was firmly embedded in a happier past and found it difficult to relate to the 'youth revolt' of the late 60s. In the French events of '68 the 'official' anarchists had played an essentially marginal role.

So, much re-inventing of the wheel took place in the early 1970s.

British Platformism

1970 saw Britain's first Platformist group, with the forming of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists (ORA). Although this organisation signified a break with the chaotic synthesist approach to anarchism hitherto employed in post-war Britain, much of its politics seemed to echo the Trotskyist left. Eventually a large part of the organisation ended up joining the Trotskyist camp itself. Subsequent Platformist-orientated anarcho-communist groups, such as the Anarchist Workers Association (AWA) and the short-lived Libertarian Communist Group also displayed Leninist and reformist tendencies that would eventually see their abandoning libertarian politics. But the legacy of these groups was important for two reasons. One, they had, prior to their degeneration, established a bridgehead against the dominant tendencies within British anarchism, notably individualism and anti-organisationalism. And secondly they showed later militants how not to create consistently revolutionary organisations (a lesson unfortunately lost upon the Anarchist Workers Group of the 1980s/90s.).

Around the same period of the mid to late 1970s other tendencies also began to emerge, notably from an unlikely source – the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB). This party, celebrating its centenary in 2004, defends a particular, and indeed consistent, version of Marxism that refuses any compromise with 'reformism' or struggles around bread and butter issues, instead organising to 'make socialists' through propaganda and to contest elections. Some younger members within the SPGB had began to question the timeless orthodoxies of the party. These critical elements began to come together in a discussion circle which quickly realised that the way forward did not lie within the monolithic atmosphere of the party.

In the mid seventies this faction found itself outside the party. Calling itself 'Libertarian Communism' it attempted to re-assess much of the politics outlined in In The Tradition parts 1-3 whilst remaining in the framework of a Marxist analysis. After changing it's name to Social Revolution this group joined the libertarian socialist group Solidarity (see In the tradition pt.2), before embracing an unorthodox councilism in the early 1980s as the group Wildcat. Wildcat, based mainly in the North West of England, was amongst a very few currents that actually attempted to creatively advance communist political theory in the 1980s.

Democracy

People involved with Wildcat and Workers Playtime, a left communist journal in London, amongst others, were involved in discussions on the nature of democracy and the fetishization of decision-making processes. Of course, communists have always rejected representative democracy in its classical liberal democratic-parliamentarian form, but now the content, not just the form of democracy was being questioned. Sometimes this took a consciously vanguardist tone, but besides the rhetoric there were serious questions raised about the need for working class militants to push ahead with action, regardless of the outcome of ballots, shows of hands etc. These questions were, partially at least, emerging because of the practical struggles that were taking place in the British coalfields during the 1984-85 miners strike. The capitalist media and sections of the left and far left were insisting that the National Union of Mineworkers should have held a ballot in order to have brought into the strike thousands of scabbing Nottinghamshire miners.

Communists began to talk of a need for the revolutionary minorities of the working class to, when necessary, to ignore 'majority' decisions and to find ways of organising in an egalitarian way without fetishising the atomising nature of democratic decision-making. These ideas were really a reflection of how workers in struggle (particularly the Hit Squads of the Miners Strike) have to operate in order to be effective.

Continued next issue.

A SIBERIAN MAKHNOVSCHINA?

Academics like Paul Avrich, along with militants like Voline, Gorelik and Archinov, have given us only a sketch of anarchism in Siberia. The important role of anarchism there has remained obscured.

Now the work of Anatoli Shtirbul has cast a spotlight on this region and its anarchist history. His work `The anarchist movement in Siberia in the first quarter of the 20th century: Anti-statist revolt and non-statist self-organisation of the workers` has been published by Omsk University in 1996 but as yet has not appeared in any translations in Western European countries. His two-volume work contains many documents from the archives of both the Cheka (the Bolshevik secret police and chief arm of repression) and the Communist Party, as well as eyewitness accounts from different sources. Shtirbul is certainly no anarchist, let alone sympathetic towards anarchism, but he has painstakingly demonstrated its influence on both revolutionaries and general population of Siberia.

Shtirbul links up the anarchist tradition with the secular traditions in Siberia. He instances the tendency towards anti-feudal autonomy of the Cossack groups, the strong links of solidarity between the peasants and bandit groups, the anti-statism of dissident Russian Orthodox groups and the influence of Protestantism in the region in the 19th century, and the existence of cooperative practices among both peasants and workers. Bakunin has often been ridiculed, including by Marxists, for his support for bandit groups within the Russian Empire. This work gives some credence towards his recognition of the social importance of banditism and its radical possibilities. In fact Shtirbul, basing himself on the work of Lojdikov, believes that Bakunin deepened his libertarian convictions whilst exiled in Siberia. This was certainly the case with Kropotkin, who admitted as such in his memoirs.

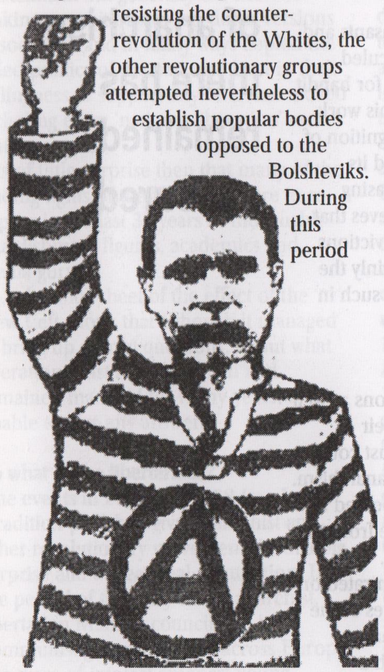
Exile

The presence of anarchists in the prisons as well as in exile in Siberia as the result of their activities against the Tsarist regime must count as one of the foundations of Siberian anarchism. The first specific anarchist groups appeared in 1902, and their social appearance date from the first Russian Revolution of 1905-1906. Very much in a minority, anarchists concentrated on oral or written propaganda. The failures of the reformist parties and the repression that followed the revolution, coincided with a worsening economic situation and fall in the

standard of living. This pushed a section of politically active workers towards anarchist positions. The Tomsk anarchist group, meeting in 1907, decided to spread propaganda through spoken and printed word, agitation in the armed forces to prepare an insurrection, legal activity via cooperatives, unions and solidarity funds, expropriation of the State banks and private rich individuals, terrorism against certain individuals. In collaboration with the Social-Democrats, the Social-Revolutionaries, and non-party revolutionaries various armed actions took place: an aborted uprising in 1907 at Omsk, and one in 1911 at Tchita, with the desertion of 30 % of a regiment. Acts of expropriation and terrorism were equally numerous.

In 1914 a conference of anarchist communists took place in a village in Irkutsk province. 30 people participated and established a double line, anarchist propaganda and terrorism against the representatives of power. At the same time there developed the splitting of the anarchist movement into three currents, anarchist communism, anarchosyndicalism and anarchist individualism. Shtirbul estimates 100 anarchists compared to 3,000 Social-Democrats and 1,000 Socialist-Revolutionaries for the period 1906-1907. In 1917 Shtirbul estimates 46 anarchist groups and clubs with 800 militants.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 turned rapidly in favour of the Bolsheviks, who quickly got control of all the apparatus of government. Occupied with resisting the counter-revolution of the Whites, the other revolutionary groups attempted nevertheless to establish popular bodies opposed to the Bolsheviks. During this period the anarchists split into pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet tendencies. In Siberia, the anarchists started a constructive activity, notably organising among the miners of Keremovo. This was despite internal problems linked to the presence of "criminal elements" in its ranks.



In September and October, workers seized the factories and workshops. Shtirbul refers to a "spontaneous anarchism" without apparent link to the anarchist organisations. This explains Lenin's anxiety that the situation was getting out of control of the Bolsheviks.

At Irkutsk, where the reactionary general Kornilov was in control, there was a failed uprising of the garrison in September 1917, but equally there was anarchist agitation among the garrisons at Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, Tcheremkhovo, Semipalatinsk, Tchita and among the fleet on Lake Baikal. Whilst the activity of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Menshevik rapidly decreased, that of the Bolsheviks and the anarchists grew. The anarchists were strongly implanted in the regions of Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk and around Lake Baikal. These 4 regions covered nearly three and a half million square kilometres, 12.7 per cent of Siberia.

Soviets

Anarchist books- Kropotkin, Reclus, and Malatesta- began to be published by Novomirski Editions as well as the appearance of newspapers like Sibirskiy Anarkhist (The Siberian Anarchist) in Krasnoyarsk and Buntovnik (The Insurgent) in Tomsk. Conlicts began to develop between anarchists and Bolsheviks.

During the winter of 1917-18 the Krasnoyarsk anarcho-syndicalists declared themselves opposed to the " the taking of power in the Soviets" and affirmed that they were prepared to struggle against the parties that left no place for "proletarian revolutionaries". In spring 1918, the Tomsk anarchists defended an organisation of soviets that truly expressed the interest of the workers. In the course of 1918 there could be traced an anarchist presence at different congresses of soviets.: 7 delegates out of 104 for West Siberia, at Irkutsk in January. Beyond these figures, certain details indicate an anarchist influence in these structures. At the all-Siberia congress of soviets, which took place in February at Irkutsk, there were 8 anarchist delegates out of 202. The congress elected to its direction 25 Bolsheviks, 11 Socialist-Revolutionaries, 4 Maximalists, 4 anarchists and 2 Internationalist Social-Democrats.(just over 45% of the direction were therefore non-Bolshevik).

Shtirbul recognises the growing influence of the anarchists among railway workers and peasants, reinforced by the soldiers of anarchist persuasion sent to Siberia. Interestingly, he comes to the same conclusions as Makhno and Arshinov- it was the lack of coordination and an absence of tactical unity that hindered the development of anarchism comparable to that of the Bolsheviks on the level of Siberia and Russia.

The Bolsheviks moved against the anarchists in spring 1918, using the Cheka to attack them and imprison them. But the disarming of anarchist units in Siberia by the Bolsheviks was hindered by the attack by the Whites led by Kolchak in March 1918. These units, as well as units organised by the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, fought too efficiently for the Bolsheviks to allow themselves to destroy them. They were in the first rank of the underground resistance when the Whites occupied Siberia. In autumn 1918 anarchist peasant guerrilla groups appeared in the regions already mentioned. Novoselov was commander of a group of tens of combatants singing The March of the Anarchists and flying red and black flags inscribed with the slogan "Anarchy is the Mother of Order" (a sentence from Reclus also used on Makhnovist flags). Other anarchist detachments elected their commanders. Shtirbul considers that a significant number of the 140,000 revolutionary combatants in Siberia were under anarchist influence. Like the Makhnovist detachments who contributed in a decisive fashion to the defeat of the White general Denikin in the Ukraine, the Siberian anarchist partisans (Novoselov and Rogov) contributed to the pushing back of Kolchak, From a strictly military point of view, the support of the anarchists in the struggle against the Whites was indispensable. This explains why, despite orders from Moscow, there were severe problems with the crushing of Siberian anarchism, as local Bolsheviks regarded the anarchists as honest revolutionaries.

Suspicions

The Communist Party had problems in Siberia with the designation by Moscow of leaders from outside the region and the nomination of ex-Tsarist officers as Red Army leaders. These circumstances gave validity to anarchist suspicions about the Bolsheviks and their proposals that the revolution be controlled by the masses themselves. Within the Fourth Army of Peasant Partisans led by Marmontov, the commander M.V. Kozyr proposed that the soviets be organised without the Bolsheviks. The Communist Party leadership had him removed and had a Bolshevik put in his place. Immediately a mass assembly of the garrison voted through the following resolution:" The revolutionary committeees of the military elected by us have no power... no-one can dismiss our representatives and replace them with people that we do not know...". Kozyr himself said that "Let us name the best among us choose those who merit our confidence and who understand our needs." A report of January 1920 for the Altai region by the government noted that the peasants had expected the development of regional control. When this clashed with the centralising tendencies of the Bolsheviks, growing antipathy resulted.

Resistance to the incorporation of partisan units was organised around the units commanded by the anarchists Novoselov, Rogov, Lubkov and Plotnikov, in the Altai, Tomsk and Semipalatinsk regions. The anarchists led a campaign for the creation of self-organised peasant collectives and the freeing of Rogov, which they achieved in April 1920. On 1st May that year, there was a massive anarchist meeting in the village of Julanikh, 120 km northeast of Barnoul, where speakers paid their respects to the victims of White terror. A thousand partisans took part and several thousand peasants attended, flying red and black flags. Two days later an insurrection broke out. A thousand people gathered. Novoselov, who had commanded a unit of one hundred anarchist fighters which had ranged nearly one thousand kilometres in the Altai and Kuzbas regions, from December 1918 to December 1919, proposed the creation of an Anarchist Federation of the Altai (AFA) which was supported by Rogov and seven other commanders. The military detachment grew to one thousand and received the support of thousands of peasants from the Pritchensk region. This insurrection grew thanks to the activities of the AFA in the Red Army, the militia and the Cheka (the last extremely significant as it was the armed wing of repression of the Bolsheviks and indicates the level of disaffection). Anarchist partisans occupied the northeast region of Barnaul and the Biiski, Kuznetskov and Novonikolaev regions.

Despite orders from the Moscow centre, the local Bolshevik authorities held their fire, probably because they feared that disaffection would spread to other army units. Once the Red Army began to attack, the Rogov units split into small units which dispersed throughout the taiga.

In June 1920 Rogov was captured and committed suicide (?) Novoselov continued the struggle up to September 1920, before going into hiding with his partisans. At the same time Lubkov sparked a new insurrection in the Tomsk region, grouping 2,500 to 3,000 fighters. Defeated, Lubkov attempted to negotiate a truce with the Bolsheviks before vanishing into the taiga with some of his partisans. In January 1921 Novoselov participated in a new insurrection at Julianikh. His peasant army gathered together 5-10,000 combattants. In an extremely desperate situation, he attempted to form an alliance with anticommunist forces, including the Whites. He hoped to turn against them once victory over the Bolsheviks was gained (the Makhnovists in the Ukraine refused such an alliance on political principle and actually went into military alliance with the Reds, though the latter turned on them).Both the stances of the Novoselov and Makhno movements point to a lesson of the need for complete autonomy from any antianarchist current). Novoselov was quickly crushed.

Shtirbul believes that the "Siberian Makhnovschina" was a contributory factor in the adoption by the Bolsheviks of the New Economic Policy (NEP).

The Bolsheviks continued their war against those who had heroically fought in the underground resistance against Kolchak's Whites. In 1923, in another onslaught against revolutionary forces outside the Bolshevik Party, the staff of the irregular units at Nikolayevsk on the Amur were shot - these included the Maximalist Nina Lebedieva and the anarchist Triapitzin (the Maximalists were a split from the Socialist Revolutionary Party, who came to adopt positions very close to anarchism). These irregulars had defeated the Japanese invading forces. Also shot were members of the local soviet, the Communist Party member Sasov and others who had questioned the setting up of the Far Eastern Republic as an artificial buffer state by the Bolsheviks. Between February and April of that year mass arrests of anarchists, Maximalists and Socialist-Revolutionaries took place. Worst of all were the actions in Vladivostok on February 26th when members of the underground workers organisations and of irregular units were rounded up. These included 8 Maximalists and 4 anarchists including the editor of the paper Black Flag and the irregular partisans Khanienko and Ustimenko. 38 more, again including Maximalists, Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and anarchists, were arrested in Blagoviestchensk on April 10th. A "White Guard" plot was fabricated by the Cheka at a trial of those arrested who were arraigned at Chita. Eight were shot and ten others sentenced to long prison sentences. As an opponent of the Bolsheviks wrote in a letter : " backed up by the Left Socialist-revolutionaries and the Anarchists, the workers and peasants put up during the elections to the Soviet their own independent revolutionary but non-partisan ticket and refused to vote for the Communists".

"The Bolsheviks moved against the anarchists in spring 1918, using the Cheka to attack and imprison them."

Adapted from a review by Frank Mintz in the French anarchist magazine A Contretemps.

CAMILLE PISSARRO

At the end of the nineteenth century, anarchist ideas had a notable influence not just among workers but also in literary and artistic circles in France.

Many were the writers and painters who enthused at the idea of social revolution. For certain of them, it was no more than a fashion; they abandoned their ideal when success and fortune came. But others stayed faithful all their lives to anarchism. Among them, one finds Camille Pissarro, the hundredth anniversary of whose death was celebrated in 2003.

He was born on St. Thomas, a Caribbean island that was then a Danish possession. His father was a Jewish tradesman of Portuguese origin. He thought that his son would follow him in business, but Camille profited from the visit to St. Thomas of the Danish painter Fritz Melbye and followed him to Venezuela. He started painting landscapes, flora and fauna.

In 1855 at Paris, he took a course in fine arts, without much enthusiasm. He was a pupil of Corot and was influenced by the realism of Courbet. In 1857, at the Swiss academy, he met the future impressionists Monet, Renoir and Cezanne who became his friends.

In 1870, the Franco-Prussian war obliged him to flee to England. He left behind him 1,500 canvasses which were destroyed by the soldiers. The paintings of Constable and turner influenced him. Returning to France, he painted at Louveciennes and at Pontoise, often with Cezanne. His painting became more and more airy, close to that of Monet. His paintings presented the life and work of villagers.

Impressionists

Today, crowds descend in mass on each new Impressionist exhibition. But, in that period, intolerance towards novelty was incredible. In 1874, Monet, Pissarro, Sisley, Renoir, Cezanne and Degas organised an exhibition. All the press ridiculed them. *Le Figaro* notably wrote: "They opened an exhibition which they said was of painting...5 or 6 mad people, including a woman, met there. These so-called artists took canvasses, colour and brushes, threw several tones around haphazardly and signed the lot". In derision, they were called impressionists. Three years later, they proudly claimed this description.

Despite the interest of several art dealers and collectors, it was difficult to sell the paintings. Pissarro had to produce a lot to support his family (he had 7 children). Often he could not buy his painting material. His material situation did not get better until 1879. In 1884, when he was living at Eragny-sur-Epte an exhibition of his paintings was very successful in the United States.

Pissarro was already aware of anarchist ideas. If he preferred the Republic to a restoration of the monarchy, his letters show that he had no illusions about politicians. As an artist of the avant-garde, he was disgusted by bourgeois society. He refused authority and exalted the individual. Anarchism permitted him to explain his own concept of beauty. The reading of the works of Kropotkin, Proudhon and Grave convinced him of the need for social revolution.

On the technical level, he drew close for a short period to the method of Seurat and Signac (himself an anarchist) and adopted the principle of systematic division (pointillism or neo-impressionism).

Despite numerous criticisms, from 1890 his exhibitions were a great success and the value of his paintings rose.

You do not find open declarations of anarchism in the painting of Pissarro. His work consists of landscapes above all, and several portraits and still lifes. After 1890 he also realised wide views of urban sites (Paris and Rouen). For him the villages and fields are a representation of Utopia and had to be protected for the future society from industrialisation.

Pissarro participated in the Club de l'art social (The social art club) in 1899 alongside the sculptor Rodin, and the anarchist militants Grave, Pouget and Louise Michel. He was a partisan of art for art's sake. "All the arts are anarchist! When they are beautiful and fine!" He was not favourable to art with a social message. Unlike Kropotkin in his book *The Conquest of Bread* he did not think it was necessary to be a peasant to render the poetry of the fields in paintings. He wanted to share the liveliest emotions with his fellows. For him a beautiful piece of art was an attack on bourgeois taste. Pissarro was an optimist who saw an anarchist future soon to come, where people, freed from religious and capitalist ideas, could appreciate his art.

Anarchist art

In 1890 he realised an album of 28 quick pen sketches for two of his nieces. Entitled

'Les Turpitudes Sociales'; they mercilessly depict Money, the Stock exchange, Capital, religion, the Bosses, Wage slavery, Poverty, Hunger and Suicide. Hope is represented by a barricade scene and by a sketch where an old philosopher watches a sun rising over the letters of the word "Anarchie".

Pissarro was not a violent man but he understood the reasons for the anarchist bomb attacks of the 1880s. After the assassination of President Carnot by Caserio, Pissarro had to take refuge in Belgium, like the anarchist men of letters Octave Mirbeau and Bernard Lazare, from the repression against anarchism. There he met the anarchist geographer Elisee Reclus and the poet Emile Verhaeren. His moral and financial support towards victims of repression was important. He helped the children of imprisoned anarchists, Emile Pouget, and Italian comrades in exile. He regularly paid off the debts of the newspapers of Jean Grave, *La Revolte* and *Les Temps Nouveaux*.

His friend Jean Grave founded Les Temps Nouveaux in 1895. This newspaper was regularly published up to 1914. Many artists favourable to anarchism contributed to it: Luce, Cross, Signac, Van Rysselberghe, Aristide Delannoy, Valloton, Steinlen, etc. Pissarro only contributed 3 lithographs but his financial support was very regular. He encouraged his sons, Lucien, Georges and Rodo, all artists themselves, to send their own drawings to the paper. He also gave some of his works as prizes in lotteries organised to support the paper.

During the anti-Semitic hysteria surrounding the Dreyfus affair, he struggled against injustice and anti-Semitism alongside Octave Mirbeau and Maximilien Luce, but broke with Degas and Renoir who took opposing positions.

The above article was adopted from one by Felip Equy in the French anarchist paper Le Monde libertaire.

FRENCH CONNECTIONS

A History of the French Anarchist Movement, 1917-1945 - David Berry. Greenwood Press. 323p. Hardback.

"Distinguishing itself clearly from other movements by its refusal to have anything to do with the putrescence which is bourgeois democracy, anarchism represents, in the eyes of thousands of revolutionary workers, the Barbarian who will raze to the ground the old society collapsing in blood and chaos and guarded by its mercenaries and its corrupt morality, in order to replace it with a higher form of civilization". Charles Ridel, 1938.

This extremely valuable book tells the story of the French anarchist movement's struggles with both organisation and the lack of it. As such, it should be read for its lessons for all anarchist movements, in whatever country they are organising.

Along with a recent work on the Siberian anarchist movement (see separate article) the work underlines the crying need for organisation. All serious anarchists should get hold of a copy of this (try and get it from a library because of the high cost of this hardback) and use it as ammunition in the fight against disorganisation, lack of unity and collective action, fixation on localism to the detriment of a more global approach, and "spontaneity" and anti-organisation elevated to theory.

Both the Russian and Spanish revolutions presented great challenges for the anarchist movement, as did the Second World War and the Occupation. David Berry goes into these problems in detail. He also demolishes the myth much put about by academics and Marxists (sometimes one and the same) that support for anarchism came primarily from one or all of the following categories: the bohemian fringe, intellectuals, the petty bourgeoisie or the lumpenproletariat. Marxists saw anarchism as a political current that was looking backwards, that it represented the interests of a primarily artisanal working class that was being superceded by a proletariat concentrated in factories. Berry shows that whilst it may be true that anarchism was supported in France in the last part of the 19th century by workers in traditional, highly skilled jobs, this was because French working-class consciousness had its roots in these social categories and not among factory workers. He demonstrates that this had changed by the 1890s and anarchists in the artisanal trades were in sharp decline with an increasing number among the concentrated mass industries. His own studies point to a clear majority of blue-collar workers. He also points out that the "petty bourgeois" occupations of some anarchists- café proprietors, market-stall holders, peddlers and small shop-keepers was because many of these had been troublesome workers blacklisted by the bosses. For them these occupations were a last resort. He asserts that there was no

great difference in term of class between members of the Communist Party and the organisation the Anarchist Union (UA) in the 1920s. Furthermore, by the time of the Popular Front the anarchist movement was significantly more "proletarian" than the Socialist Party.

Organisation

Berry is –rightly- scathing about the damaging effects that individualist anarchism had on the anarchist movement in France.This influence decreased in the years after the end of the First world War and the movement was increasingly dominated by anarchist communism. Many anarchists saw the Russian revolution as a libertarian one, and they interpreted the soviets in an anarchist fashion. A member of the French Anarchist Federation, Lebourg, stated in 1920 that a new revolutionary tradition was emerging. Indeed, he and other anarchists were involved in setting up the Communist Federation of Soviets(FCS). This was the transformation of the first French Communist Party, created in 1919, into something organised on a federal basis.It should be noted that this first Communist Party sought to unite those anarchists, syndicalists and socialists who had adopted an anti-war and class struggle position. Lebourg justified this regroupment by talking about "the antagonisms which have always divided the revolutionary proletariat into two groups: the centralists and the federalists, those who favour political action and those who favour direct class action, the authoritarian communists and the libertarian communists. We are at present witnessing a regrouping, within the Communist International, of the partisans of these two tendencies".

The regrouping was a brittle one and soon fell apart. Nevertheless, as Berry notes, the sovietism developed in the FCS by anarchists and others called for tighter organization, structured in a libertarian and federalist manner, with a high degree of ideological and practical cohesion. It was anti-parliamentarian and revolutionary and based itself on the working class. It criticised the individualism and idealism of some currents within anarchism.It was inspired by German councilism and Russian sovietism.By mid-1920 the FCS had developed criticisms of the Russian Bolsheviks, whilst defending the Russian revolution as a libertarian one.

Meanwhile the Anarchist Federation and the Federation Communiste Libertaire du Nord – organised around the paper Germinal in northern France- were re-asserting anarchist communism and developing their criticisms of Bolshevism. The paper of the Anarchist Federation, Le Libertaire, increased its print run to 20,000 and Germinal went from irregular to 3 regional editions on a weekly basis. Germinal/FCL also called for tactical and strategic unity. Here too, a clear break with any admiration for Bolshevism came in 1920. The Anarchist Federation's honeymoon with Bolshevism, on the other hand, only really lasted 4 months. The Anarchist Federation transformed itself into the Union Anarchiste in 1920, and criticisms of Bolshevism became more acute, in particular as more news and information reached them from Russia. Antagonisms between anarchists and the official Communist Party broke out into the open in a violent and spectacular way in 1924. At a meeting at the Maison des Syndicats (the House of the Unions) an argument between anarchists and Communists ended with the shooting dead of two apparently unarmed anarchists.

The period of 1924-1934 was a period of crisis for French anarchism. The UA turned itself to the question of organisation. At its 1921 Congress Bastien stated that the removal of both "the elements of extreme individualism" and "the supporters of confusionism" had strengthened anarchist communism. Unfortunately, attempts by him and others to develop more effective organization were to be thwarted. The debate about organization did not really crystallise until 1926, however, with the appearance of the Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists, written by Russian and Ukrainian anarchists in exile in France. For those French anarchists arguing for more effective organisation and action, this document seemed to be a distillation and clarification of all their ideas.

There was fierce argument in the UA and in the wider movement about the Platform. The platformist position triumphed at the 1927 Congress of the UA and part of the opposition left to found their own organisation. However platformist influence was not complete, and the UA- now the Union Anarchiste Communiste revolutionnaire- was to be the battlefield for supporters and opponents of the Platform for several years to come.

By 1934-36 those who supported the Platform were once again in a position to dominate the UA and this coincided with the Popular Front government, the threat of fascism and the Spanish Revolution. Sales of le Libertaire rose sharply as did membership of the UA.- a quadrupling. Indeed one May Day 1937 run of le Libertaire was 100,000! The UA was able to announce in autumn 1937 that it was "the only force having the authority and influence necessary to lead the revolutionary movement". However, despite this resurgence, new recruits were not always retained and compared to the Socialists and the Communists, the movement was still weak.

Spain

Response to the Spanish revolution and the decision by some anarchists to enter the government also divided the movement. The UA mobilised for maximum support for the Spanish revolution as did the anarchosyndicalist union the CGT-SR and the split from the UA, the Federation Anarchiste (FAF). However, there were severe criticisms by the latter two of the stance of he mass Spanish anarchosyndicalist union, the CNT. The UA, on the other hand, was unwilling to criticise the Spanish anarchist movement. In fact, the entry of CNT notables into the Catalan government and the national government, were not met with indignation but with a reserved disquiet. There were arguments in the pages of le Libertaire that these governments were not the normal sort, they were more like anti-fascist fronts! Furthermore, such participation showed how important the CNT and the specific anarchist organisation, the FAI, were, and should be greeted with enthusiasm! Internally, there were debates in the UA about this question., but it was agreed that any criticism "that may weaken ...solidarity is to be banished from our ranks". The differences between the UA on one hand, and the CGTSR and FAF , on the other, were exacerbated as a result of this. While it is true that the CGTSR/FAF couched their criticisms in a harshly purist and sectarian way, "anti-fascist unity" seems to have blinkered the UA, and gagged them when it came to expressing criticism of CNT-FAI "ministerialism"

Second World War

The Second World War caused the disintegration of the anarchist movement. The UA stated ; " The only just war the workers can make is the social war, class war". In the months leading up to the outbreak, anarchists, demoralised already after their differences over Spain, were under continuous attack from the State. Prudhommeaux of the FAF noted:" Armed revolutionary struggle on a world scale is out of the question in the present situation and given the parlous state of our forces. The retreat has been too generalised since July 1936 for us to have any chance of fighting effectively for our cause, and while we still have so many wounds to heal and are still suffering from so many losses. As for getting ourselves killed for capitalism, too many of our comrades have already fallen in Spain and elsewhere".

The UA decided : " In the event of war, comrades should first of all save their lives in order to be able to create a clandestine organisation which will allow them to remain in contact, even if all propaganda is impossible.." Sauliere, a stalwart of the underground movement in southern France wrote that the group he helped create in Marseilles was "doubly clandestine" because "our propaganda attacked not only fascism, but all those responsible for the war, including capitalism and the Stalinist dictatorship". Sauliere's group produced a poster calling on working class conscripts of all countries to turn their bayonets not on each other but on their own leaders, whether they wear the swastika, the red star, the Order of the Garter, the Cross of Lorraine or the Frankish axe".

It was thanks to Sauliere and those like him, that a post-war anarchist movement was slowly reconstructed, although the old questions and quarrels of the inter-war years, on organisation, on how to relate to the masses, and a whole number of other matters, were to continue to plague that movement. Berry's history is important, and it should be read and learnt from.

The Fountain at the Centre of the World - Robert Newman. Verso, 2003. ISBN 1859845438

This, the third novel by Robert Newman, comedian and activist, is that rarest of things: an explicitly political, indeed openly partisan novel that *doesn't* make you cringe.

An adventure and misadventure story set against the background of capitalist globalisation and the struggle against it, The Fountain at the Centre of the World is, above all else, a book, the humanity of whose central characters, rapidly engage the reader. If one of the signs of a good book is that, soon after meeting the characters, you care deeply about what happens to them, then this is a *very* good book indeed. The challenges faced by Daniel in the search for his father, challenges which he faces on two continents and in three alien cultures, are soon those of the reader. The final chapters assault senses and emotions equally as a reunion, amidst the chaos of the Seattle protests of 1999, appears possible at last.

Newman has refused to reduce his protagonists to cartoon heroes and villains whilst making no pretence at objectivity or detachment. We are not subjected to any attempt to devalue the actions of the characters through exposing their deep psychological flaws, a popular device used by cynical hacks to explain the motivations of revolutionaries. Values are at work here and they are the values of people who believe not just that another world is possible, but that another way achieving it, beyond NGOs, Union bureaucracies and progressive politicians, is possible too.

A few negatives though. Sometimes the book appears to have reached the shelves in note form, like the author was pushed for time or was writing a screenplay. And in a book that is so obviously meticulously researched and, therefor convincing, it's a pity the Mexican Frente Autentico Trabajo is described as "anarcho-syndicalist". It isn't. Other than these criticisms (the latter one that only an anarcho-trainspotter could make!), this is a remarkable book. Go and order it from your library. Unsurprizingly, it couldn't find a mainstream fiction publisher so it's out on Verso at the inflated price of 10.99 for a paperback.

Louis Lecoin: An Anarchist Life - Sylvain Garel. Kate Sharpley Library. 25p. £1.50

Louis Lecoin came to Paris from the Cher department in 1905.at the age of 16. Here he got a job as a nurseryman. He took part in a gardeners' strike and glasshouses and cold frames suffered as a result of direct action taken by him and others! He was later arrested during a gardeners' demonstration. Because he had attended an anarchist public meeting the night before, his pockets were stuffed with pamphlets and handbills he had picked up there. The judge took him to be an anarchist, and he spent 3 months in jail. On his release he did start moving in an anarchist direction. Called up in 1910, he began to resist commands. When a rail strike broke out, Lecoin refused to be used as a strike-breaker. For this he received 6 months prison. When he came out of the army he joined a group of the Anarchist Communist Federation (FCA) in a working class quarter of Paris, Belleville. The FCA had a membership of 400 and the young Lecoin became its secretary in 1912. He launched himself into anti-militarist activity, and was sentenced to 5 years prison for having printed a poster inciting desertion. Released in 1916, he refused to answer the draft and was again imprisoned! From here he edited an underground edition of *le Libertaire*, the FCA's paper (although the FCA itself had disintegrated). Lecoin was not released until 1920, by which time he had become a famous militant.

Lecoin's release coincided with the founding of the UA, (see above) which had replaced the FCA. Lecoin became administrator of *le Libertaire*.In 1922, for personal reasons, he resigned this post. He assisted le Libertaire when it became a daily at the end of 1923 for a time, but his major efforts were now concentrated on providing support to Sacco and Vanzetti, two Italian-American anarchists under sentence of death in the States, and to the Spanish anarchists Jover, Ascaso and Durruti under threat of extradition to Spain from France. He set up the Right to Asylum Committee and launched the Sacco-Vanzetti Committee.

In the struggle between opponents and supporters of the Platform in the UA, Lecoin was one of those who rejected its proposals but stayed in the UA. Lecoin and his associates pushed for the organisation's congress of 1930 to be open to subscribers to *le Libertaire* as well as to the breakaway group. The result was a defeat for the platformists. Lecoin now took a back seat, involving himself in humanitarian campaigns involving support from many celebrities for his Right to Asylum Committee. Many UA members criticised him for his activities whose principles and methods were "at odds with anarchism's overall principles.

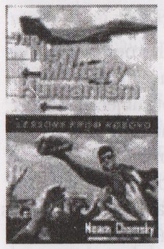
Lecoin was involved in intense activity around support for Spain from 1936 onwards and the UA charged him and a few others with setting up the Free Spain Committee.

Lecoin attempted to stop the looming World War by propaganda. Ten days after war broke out, he helped issue 100,000 copies of a leaflet "Immediate peace". This was a vague humanitarian appeal that failed to refer to class struggle, that assumed that either the French or German states could be persuaded to give up their war plans. Nevertheless, Lecoin was arrested and remained inprison until 1941. Drained physically and psychologically, he

kept his head down for the rest of the war. He was later criticised for his passivity in this period. He was not one of those who was at the foundation meetings of the Anarchist Federation(FA) in 1945. He remained outside of the FA., producing his own review, which was influenced strongly by individualism and humanism. He was involved in a whole series of campaigns based around celebrities. One of them, around conscientious objection in 1958, included a Protestant pastor and a Catholic abbot. Lecoin carried on in this fashion until his death in 1971, often being arrested and imprisoned, and sometimes going on hunger strike. Alongside this was his activity in the workplace (he had been a proof-reader on and off since 1928). Lecoin was a brave individual, willing to risk imprisonment and often mobilising against injustice and attacks on anarchism. Witness his interventions around the expulsion of Daniel Cohn-Bendit from France in 1968, and the murder of the anarchist Pinelli by the Italian state in 1970., as well as the significant sum of money he collected for the FA's premises in 1962 when it was bombed by the far-right OAS. Set against this is the misgivings felt by many in the anarchist movement about Lecoin's reputation as a loose cannon and the dubious nature of his campaigns.

In David Berry's book reviewed above, space is given to the Revision Group, which produced a theoretical magazine of the same name. This group had many trenchant criticisms of the anarchist movement in France.One of its militants, Charles Ridel was scathing in his criticisms of "supposedly anarchist campaigns void of any revolutionary content and headed by committees full of 'independents' "hams and posers with a tear always at the ready"". For Ridel, any campaign, any movement, any action which was not anchored in the class struggle lost all validity for a revolutionary anarchist and resulted in the anarchist organisation becoming a "mere annexe of the political 'left'". This is aimed at some of the campaigns the UA was involved in, and in particular those that Lecoin initiated.

The New Military Humanism: Lessons from Kosovo - Noam Chomsky
Pluto Press, London. www.plutobooks.com. ISBN 0-7453-1633-6 1999



You may be wondering why, after September 11 and war with Afghanistan and Iraq, we didn't choose to review one of Chomsky's more recent offerings, such is the pace he is able to churn them out. But it's right now that parts of the left are being challenged to take a hard look back at Kosovo and wondering if they got it wrong. Alongside a US under Clinton, this was Tony Blair's (and Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's) so-called humanitarian war that is now understood for what it really was - a media manipulating dupe by NATO - a dupe made all the more powerful by the support of left-leaning UK papers like the Guardian and Independent, and worse still by the disarray in the radical left and even some of the anarchist press (see Organise! 52 - Confusion over Kosovo). Whilst we managed a couple of articles, Chomsky was already there with this book barely months after the bombing commenced on March 24 in 1999, dismantling the moral justification and exposing the lies by his analysis of contemporary texts and press out puts.

Much of the first part of the book, looking at the NATO allies' past record in warfare, will be preaching to the converted for many Organise! readers, but this should not put anyone off. The book contains a step-by-step review of events before and immediately leading up to the bombing, including diplomatic manoeuvrings.

NATO wanted to bomb, and ensured that diplomacy to avoid war would fail, but also deliberately misinterpreted post-war peace agreements over who would be in military command (helping to explain the `surprise` take-over of Pristina airport by Russian troops - remember that?).

Chomsky also shows how the low-level conflict in the previous year was distorted (with three quarters of 2000 recorded deaths actually being attributable to the Albanian KLA, a quarter to the Serbian Army) and that the results of the bombing \endash the Serbian Army retributions and mass exodus of the huge numbers of people we saw on our TV screens - was completely anticipated by the allies, all from NATO's own analysis!

Rounding up, Chomsky sees a US further out of control of international law and in its own words taking a post-Cold War strategic posture that benefits it to have an "irrational and vindictive" edge, for example outside of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty towards first use of mini-nukes that can be used against multiple smaller `rogue` targets. All of this is intended to give credibility to US power that is mirrored in the main reason for the Kosovo war, according to Chomsky: NATO's credibility. We are also reminded how our own George Robertson, British Defence Minister, was rewarded with leadership of NATO for toeing the US line.

Now we've had the Iraq occupation, but also a little reported upsurge in violence by nationalists in Kosovo this March and a swing to the far right in Serbia (something we predicted in Organise! 51 - Kicked in the Balkans Again. It's not NATO vs. UN any more - Europe is too divided on the Iraq war for that - it's US vs. UN, although before we get too rosy-eyed about the UN we can also turn to this book to remind us of the terrible effects of sanctions. If you're looking for more up to date material making the link with today's Iraq, you can read Chomsky's `Hegemony or Survival` (2003), or MediaLens' David Edwards' article `Kosovo and Iraq - Same Bombs, Different Lies` (April 6, 2004) that is easily found on the Web with lots more references. But, being 5 years older, The New Military Humanism helps greatly in cutting through the smokescreen raised by September 11 and the `war on terrorism,` revealing a US foreign policy that has remained for the most part constant, irrespective of political party.

If you have a book you would like us to review, please send it to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX

WHAT GOES IN ORGANISE!

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in Organise! reflect the views of the person who has written the articles and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

ORGANISING FOR INTERNATIONAL RESISTANCE

The IAF was founded in 1968 in Carrara, Italy by the Iberian (Spain and Portugal), Italian and French Federations. These federations combined several generations of anarchists from those who fought in the Spanish Revolution to young people active in the new struggles of the sixties. In subsequence years, the original three were joined by Bulgaria (in exile), Argentina and Germany. This year the IAF has been significantly expanded with the affiliation of the Czech and Slovak Federations, the Russian federation (the Association of Anarchist Movements- ADA) and ourselves, the Anarchist Federation of Great Britain.

The collapse of state capitalism in Eastern Europe has resulted in an upsurge of interest in anarchism amongst a new generation of militants looking for an alternative to both capitalism and Bolshevism. There has been an increase in anarchist organisations and many of these look towards the IAF for links with anarchists in other countries where the tradition of anarchism has a long history. In addition to the affiliation of the Czech, Slovaks and Russians, close links have been established with Belarus, Poland, Slovenia and Serbia.

The experience of the AF in Britain is in many ways similar to that of our Czech and Slovak comrades. Our movement lacks a continual tradition, embedded in the working class. Instead, the anarchist movement is small and fragile, often taking the form of ghettoised lifestylism with no serious orientation to the working class. Our contact with the historic anarchist federations has been an inspiration, encouraging us in our aim of building a movement based on the working class in the community and in the workplace.

However, there are some key differences with the experience of the federations in Eastern Europe who have lived through the oppression of state capitalism and Bolshevism.

Unlike in Britain, where Leninism and Trotskyism is still influential, the natural home for anti-capitalist activity in Eastern Europe is with anarchism, which rejects both capitalism and any attempt to recreate the state. This strengthens us in our own analysis of Bolshevism, in all its guises, as a bankrupt and dangerous movement which has no place in the revolutionary transformation of society.

International of Anarchist Federations
L'internationale des Federations Anarchistes
Internacional de las Federaciones Anarquistas
Internazionale delle Federazioni Anarchiche

The Congress was very productive and was a model of libertarian decision-making in action. Work was done in commissions which allowed for maximum participation of delegates and then overall decisions were reached through discussion, debate and consensus. It resulted in a number of initiatives to improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of international work. Expanding links with Latin America will be a priority as well as supporting the growing anarchist movement in Eastern Europe. There will be a new website, annual magazine and regular international day of action. The Anarchist Federation will be contributing to the work of co-ordinating international activity and enhancing communication, through its new role as the Secretariat of the IAF. We look forward to the opportunity of putting into practice one of our basic principles- that anarchism can only be achieved through international struggle and co-operation.

The Seventh Congress of the International of Anarchist Federations was held over the Easter week-end, 2004, in Proudhon's birthplace, Besancon in France.

LETTERS

Is Organise! Still Slipping?

A couple of issues back you quipped: `Is Organise! slipping?` Well, yes, quite frankly, is the answer, with '0:60' confirming that prognosis in veritable spades. So much so you might even consider re-titling the 'zine 'The Bolshevik Bugle' - Alarmingly regressive is the only way to describe it, containing as it does tedious recyclings of the likes of long-dead, tenuous, some would say dubious anarchists-turned-Bolshies such as Arshinov and Serge. The review of Skirda's book, for example, 'Facing the Enemy' appeared as little more than a ponderous excuse to revive (resuscitate!) the dated, discredited and very rapidly disinherited document 'The Organisational Platform.' Hardly anyone of the time it first saw the light of day, including nearly all anarchist communists, were of the opinion that there was anything useful about it as a manifesto for libertarian revolution. What's changed that it should be seen as the holy grail 80 odd years on? There is something acutely embarassing about the way supposedly progressive anti-authoritarians of the 21st century seem to be obsessed with pushing this ancient vanguardist obscurity. Similarly with the Trotsky-loving never-quite-confirmed 'anarchist' Victor Serge, subject of another book review in the journal. Please, what possible relevance can someone like Serge hold for the world as it is today? Are Bolshevist sympaticos like Arshinov and Serge really where the focus for debate needs to be in these massively dangerous and turbulent times?

Another contributor goes to inordinate lengths to talk up an outfit (the ABC/F) that in many respects in recent years has let the movements prisoners down badly. They dumped, for instance, U.S. working class prisoner Harold H.Thompson for no sound reason whatsoever. At least one ABCF clique in America was known to be nearer the diktats of Chairman Mao than anything that could be identified as anarchism of any sort. Only a year or so ago U.K. anarcho prison activist Mark Barnsley publicly alleged (Freedom 63/5) ABC elements here were corrupt. Did anyone bother to verify Barnsley's statement? Was Harold Thompson approached for his thoughts on the ABCF? Few would go as far as to deny the good work done by the ABC down the years, but they simply were not beyond reproach as the feature would have' it.

It is stated in the blurb panel promoting AF newsheet 'Resistance'... 'more and more people are coming into contact with revolutionary ideas.' What, like ideas circa 1780 as in the 'Whiteboys of Ireland' feature? Sure, an interesting enough reflection on little-known Irish history in itself, but again, a spur to contemporary revolutionary anarchism, perhaps not. Wouldn't an in-depth piece on refugees/asylum seekers have been more appropriate given the current political climate where those forced into exile are getting hammered right, left and centre? Or a closer look at Bush's Amerikkka hell-bent on subjecting the world to its own ideological recipe of aggressive, rapacious capitalism? There is the reek of something very unpleasant in the air on both sides of the Atlantic and the ideas anarchist communists should be articulating are ideas that will counter the devastating implications of Bush, Blair and Berlusconi policies before its too late.

Oh, and the letters page a correspondent, bemoaning that SHAC (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty) workers had been taken to task in '0:59' for engaging in work involving the suffering of animals, is wrong also. Unless and until workers become self-consciously critical of the work they accept payment for then nothing, absolutely nothing about this society will change for the better, never mind take on revolutionary impetus.

Still, the reviewer of the Serge book at least is deserving of some credit for acknowledging that Serge himself had, '...lost hope in the power of the working class to overthrow capitalism...' Substitute `will` (or desire or both) for 'power' and we'd be much closer to a truth the class struggle movement needs to recognise about itself in these times. Anarchist communism is a worthy aspiration. It could even be an imperative if there is to be any lasting hopes of saving the planet from a rampant, possibly fascistic capitalism of the near future. Cannot the AF turn its eyes in that direction,the starting point today, rather than facing backwards as it seems to be doing much of the time? If the ideas of yesterday were as bright as some appear to believe they were then there would be no need of people like us, would there?

For an anarchist communist world,
Frankie Dee, Merseyside

A letter for Organise!?

Send your letters to:
Organise! Letters, AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX

In Reply:

We are a federation of organisational anarchists. We strongly believe that a degree of self-organisation and co-operation will be necessary both to confront, dissolve and destroy capitalism and meet the needs and aspirations of up to six billion people in the free society of the future. By that we don't mean an organisation, one group deciding for the rest how the revolution will be brought about or carried through. We recognise the vast diversity of experience and thought that is – inexorably – taking humanity towards the free society but by many different roads and from many different starting points. So we think that books like Skirda's Facing The Enemy are useful in examining the successes and failures of organisational anarchism and making the case for collective action. But thinking well of some degree of organisation and unity in action does not make us raving Bolsheviks, as Frankie Dee asserts, not by a long-shot. Regarding The Organisational Platform for a General Union of Anarchists (to give it its full title), some members of the Anarchist Federation think it's a useful document, written as it was by people who had spent many years fighting an authoritarian revolution with some success and who came to the failures of European anarchism with fresh eyes; others of us think it less useful. The review points to the many differing opinions about The Platform voiced by anarchists and argues – as we ourselves would – that doctrinal differences can and should be put aside in pursuit of a common goal of freedom. There is strength in the unity of ideas and action, which is why the Anarchist Federation was formed. But that is a long way from the sort of unified and disciplined organisation of anarchists the authors of The Platform proposed. If you're interested in the kinds of organisation we think help people struggling to bring about a freer world, you'll find some ideas in As We See It, The Role of The Revolutionary Organisation or Beyond Resistance, all currently available from the AF.

That diversity we value in the movement comes not just from our own experiences but also the ideas and experiences of other anarchists and libertarians. We don't apologise for bringing to the attention of people the history, thought and experience of others so that they can decide for themselves what can be learnt or enjoyed from it. Perhaps Frankie Dee prefers that people like Victor Serge, Piotr Arshinov (executed by Stalin in 1937, some anarchist-turned-bolshevik) or Nestor Makhno were simply airbrushed out of anarchist history? Humans are fallible people. We fairly describe their successes and failures, their good ideas and bad, their flaws as well as their gifts. That doesn't make us apologists for their ideas or obsessed with past failures and history; we aren't.

Frankie Dee unfairly thinks us backward-looking. Sure, Organise! #60 had historical examples of self-organisation and resistance to the ruling class but it also had articles on Iraq, Oil, the Firefighters Strike and the continuing struggle of the people of Argentina against globalisation and free-market capitalism. It's a pity he didn't wait for Organise #61 before rushing to print – it had articles on direct action against the Iraq War in Ireland and the North-East, more on the struggle in Argentina and features on The New Economy, strikes at Bombardier and the current state of industrial struggle and the unions – as up to date as it gets. Organise! is not Socialist Worker, with its numbing repetition of strike, struggle, organise. It's a magazine of ideas promoting revolutionary anarchism, which requires more than endlessly harping on about Bush's Amerika – we leave that sort of thing to George Monbiot and Naomi Klein, bless 'em.

Finally, regarding the article on the ABC, Frankie Dee is reading too much from it. The article he refers to in Organise! #60 (Yelensky's Fable) is about 2400 words long; the section on the ABCF is about 70 words and simply says that it is still "very active". The rest of the article is a history of support for anarchist prisoners and the state's response from Tsarist times to the present. It steers clear of taking sides in disputes between what are – let's face it – fairly arcane matters between a relatively small number of anarchists in just one part of the world and concentrates on the history of the ABC, warts and all. We thought it was a useful balancing of accounts on behalf of people who were there, who are sometimes accused and criticised but who cannot, because they have been murdered or imprisoned by the state, reply to their critics. Sure the ABC has made mistakes from time to time but the article admits that. It rightly focuses on the "good work done by the ABC down the years", a fact that Frankie Dee acknowledges but underestimates.

Frankie Dee knows us well and we're always glad to publish letters from one of our most faithful readers. In this case his blunderbuss has hit many targets but with little effect. We're trying to build and be part of a global movement with huge diversity and one purpose - revolution. The Anarchist Federation has worked out some pretty good ideas on most things and is far more focussed on action and progress than on minor differences of opinion within other parts of the movement, which we respect but won't let hold us back. Lets keep it real.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

The campaign to secure his release continued. Finally in 1930 after 20 years of hell, Radowitzky was released. Expelled from Argentina, he took refuge in neighbouring Uruguay, again taking up the work of a mechanic. His involvement with the anarchist movement there and the struggle against the dictator Gabriel Terras in 1933 led to his arrest and deportation to the isolated Isla de Flores. When the Spanish revolution broke out, Simon headed for Spain in 1936. By now he was in his mid-forties and in poor health. He went to the Aragon front where he fought with the anarchist 28th Division led by Gregorio Jover. Here he met Antonio Casanova, originally from Galicia in North Spain, who had emigrated to Argentina at an early age and had been one of the founders of the Federación Anarco-Comunista Argentina in 1935. The two became good friends. Later Simon worked in Barcelona for the cultural division of the mass anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT. At a time of strict rationing he happened to get hold of a bottle of milk that he immediately gave to a pregnant woman that he felt needed it more than him.

With Franco's victory, he had to flee to France, where like so many others, he was interned in the concentration camp at St. Cyprien. From there, he got away to Mexico. Here, a poet managed to get him a job as a clerk at the Uruguayan Consulate. At the end of the World War, he worked in the Mexican branch of the International Rescue and Relief Committee to help political refugees in Europe, alongside the German anarchist Augustin Souchy, sending CARE food packages. He wrote for anarchist publications in Mexico.

Simon's last years were plagued by ill health. The prison years had taken their toll. When not in hospital, he lived in a shabby attic of an apartment building. He died of a heart attack on February 29, 1956 whilst working in a toy factory.

"With Radowitzky's passing one of the last social revolutionaries of the Russian Revolution of 1905, one of the finest idealists of the international labour movement was gone." Augustin Souchy.

Postscript: In November 2003, a popular assembly, meeting in the Plaza named after Ramon Falcon, voted to change its name to that of Simon Radowitzky.